

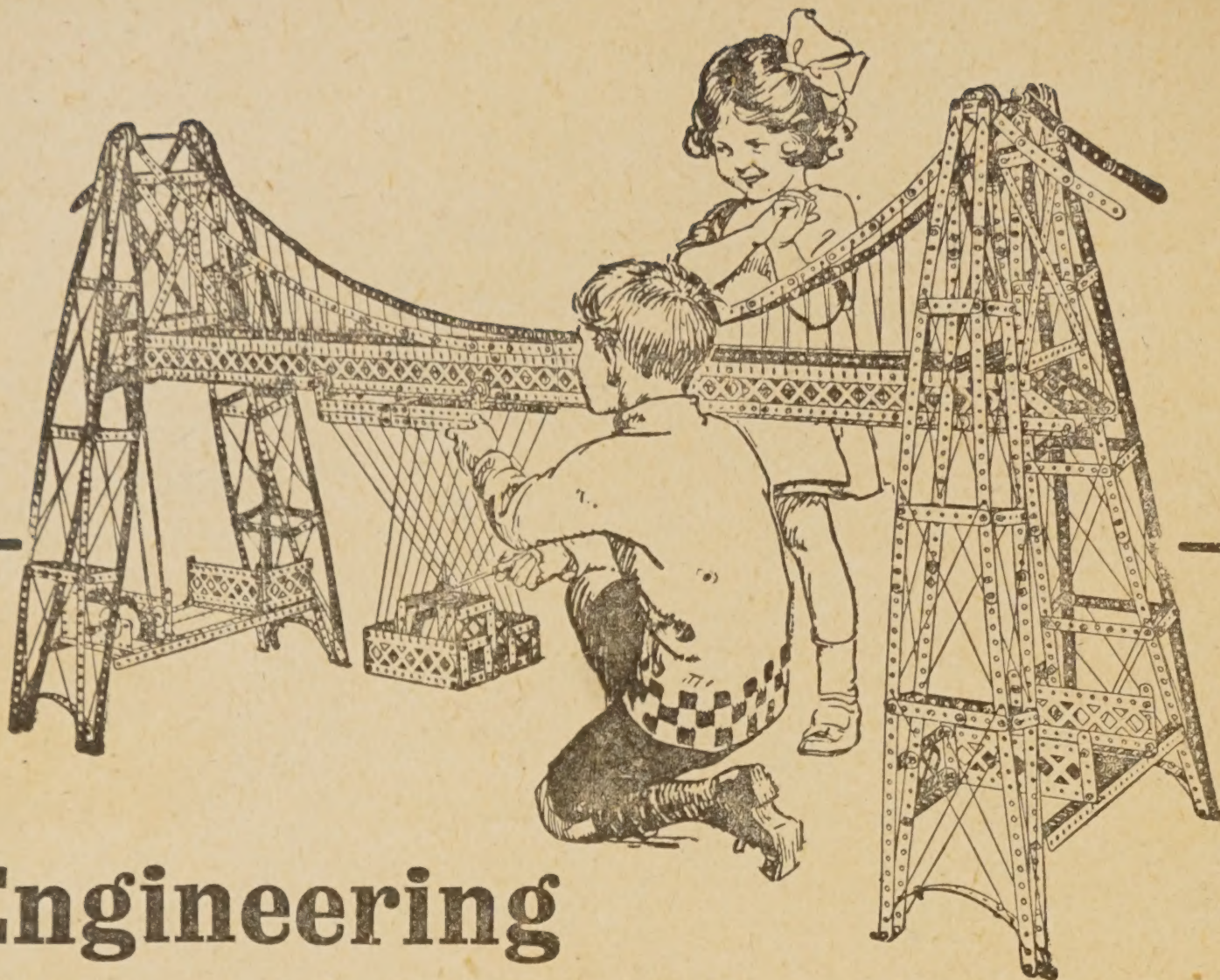
BUFFALO BILL NOVELS: 71

BUFFALO BILL'S COMRADE SCOUT



4^D
NET

TEXAS
JACK



Engineering for Boys

MECCANO is a wonderful system of engineering parts in miniature—shining steel Strips, Plates and Girders, Gear and Pulley Wheels, Nuts and Bolts.

With these you can build hundreds of fine working models, covering the whole range of movements known to engineers—Transporter Bridges like the one shown, worked by a fine little Meccano Motor, Cranes with machinery to work the load. Clocks that keep time, Looms that weave real ties and ribbons, Towers with elevators, Motors that run. They are all of correct design and work perfectly. No study is needed.

GREAT £250 PRIZE COMPETITION

Closing Date,
May 31st, 1921.

Ask your Toy Dealer for full particulars.

Prices: Complete Outfits 6/- to 180/-

MECCANO

FREE TO BOYS

A SPLENDID NEW
MECCANO BOOK.

This is a beautiful new book which shows boys how to enjoy every minute of their play hours. It explains in a simple way the joys of Meccano. It is beautifully illustrated, and each page is brimming with boy fun and happiness.

How to Get a Free Copy. Just show this page to three chums and send us their names and addresses with your own. Put No. 66 after your name for reference.

Meccano Ltd: Binns Rd: Liverpool



Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

*A Long, Thrilling Story of the
Life and Adventures of Texas Jack.*

CHAPTER I.

"A ROPE TO HANG HIMSELF."

IN France, near Avignon, where the River Durance joins the beautiful Rhone, stands an ancient castle, perched high up among the tree-crowned hills which overlook the rivers as they meet, known in the long gone by as the Castle Omohundro.

In a room of this fine old building, gorgeously furnished and hung with tapestry, an old man sat propped up with cushions in a great armchair, while the mellow light of sunset stole in through the high window facing the crimsoned west.

A physician, likewise very old, stood looking intently upon the face of the invalid, while near his right hand sat a notary, or lawyer, at a small writing-table, penning down a last will and testament, then being dictated to him.

But what contributed most to the strangeness of the scene was a young man, with fair hair, blue eyes, and a face full of intelligence, sitting before an easel, rapidly painting a picture on canvas. Near him, watching every motion of his hand as the picture grew beneath its magic touch, stood a lovely girl, who bore a marked resemblance to the aged invalid.

Back—but where the red light fell dimly on dark, scowling features—stood another young man, whose black, piercing eyes wandered from one to another of the occupants of the room with anything but friendly glances.

"Is it finished—the last word I had spoken written down?" asked the invalid, addressing the notary.

"It is, Monsieur le Marquis—all is written precisely as your excellency has ordered," was the reply.

"And you, my physician and my friend, Doctor Le Claire, pronounce me of sound mind, able to make clear my wishes, though you know as well as I that my hours are numbered, and that death waits even now at the portals of my soul?"

"Yes—Marquis of Omohundro, noblest of men and best of

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

friends. Your mind is as sound as it ever was in the heyday of healthful youth and vigour."

"Then let all within this chamber draw near to hear this will read now, that there may be no dispute hereafter."

But the young man in the background, sullen and morose in look, did not come forward, though all the rest, the artist included, gathered around where the marquis would see them.

"Where is Basil La Mort? He of all the rest should be here now," said the dying nobleman.

There was a tremor in the voice of the young girl, a shudder in her frame, and a sudden pallor in her face as she replied:

"He came to the room when I called him, uncle, but he stands back where you cannot see him."

"Does he not dare look me in the face—the gambler, the spendthrift, the libertine?" said the old man in bitter tones.

"Is he a coward as well as a rogue?"

"No!"

The young man himself answered as he strode forward, and the light fell on a form of noble proportions, yet on a face which, though handsome even in its wicked look, was marked by evil passions too plainly for his character to pass unread by any keen observer.

"No—marquis and cousin—bad as I am, I am no coward. I dare look you or any other man in the eye, living or dying, and am ready to bear the disinheritance, long since threatened by you—so far as property goes. But your title—your proud title—comes to me, and you cannot deprive me of that."

"Rash boy, you err. One lives who is of yet nearer kinship than you," said the old man.

"Ah! you mean that girl—she who shudders when she speaks my name; but she cannot take the title."

"Not that girl, but my younger brother's son, born in the grand land of the West—Jean Omohundro. He lives, as I have good reason to believe, and to him will descend my title and my estate. My money, my family jewels, all shall go to my sweet niece, my sister's child, Adeline Cherchille, with such condition as shall be heard when my will is read."

"Bah! it is a dream! The ship which bore your brother and his wife to the West was sunk at sea. They perished. You cannot disprove that. The dead do not bear sons!"

The sneer that accompanied the words made the young speaker appear absolutely hateful.

"Edouard de Carle, bring hither the picture. Is it done?" cried the marquis.

"It is, most noble marquis, done as well as my poor hand can paint it," said the artist, and he brought his easel to the front where all could see the picture on it.

A cry of wonder broke from every lip, for the face, though young, was so like that of another portrait which hung on the wall that every eye glanced from it to that.

"A Rope to Hang Himself."

It was a strange picture, one so striking that once seen it could never be forgotten. A young man, clad in the picturesque hunting costume of Western America, sat on the back of a magnificent horse, in a position of fearful peril. For the horse, thrown back on its haunches on the very brink of a terrible chasm, was held there by a turn of a lasso, which the young man had cast back over the trunk of a gnarled, lightning-riven tree just in his rear, seeking to restrain it, while helpless with terror it was hanging over the chasm of death.

The picture was terribly real, but with all its strangeness the portrait of the rider was so striking that the family resemblance could not be mistaken. The portrait on the wall was that of the old man's younger brother just spoken of.

"Friends," said the dying marquis, "God is good. I prayed when I felt the death-chill coming to my heart that He would give me some sign to tell me if one of my near kindred yet lived worthy to bear my name and title. Oh, how earnestly I prayed before I closed my eyes in sleep three nights gone by! That night the scene in this picture, just as Edouard de Carle has painted it from my direction, came to me as plain as I see it now. And while I looked in wild horror at the peril the rider was in, while his horse struggled on the dreadful brink, a gentle voice like that of Eva, my brother's wife, said: 'Jean Omohundro lives, a hero among heroes, a king among the red men of the Western wilds, my son and thy nephew!' I awoke, and from that hour I have been calm, waiting for this hour to do my duty to the living and dead. The picture is good; to you, my niece, it is given, that you may seek out your cousin Jean and call him to his own. Now let the will be read."

The notary, in a loud, clear voice, thereupon read the carefully-written document, which gave to the Marquis Jean Omohundro, born in America, the vast estate and title of the testator, and which made Adeline Cherchille his sole executrix, as well as the legatee of a large sum in gold and jewels, the last to be hers on one condition—she was to find her cousin and see that he got possession of the estate and title.

This condition was to be carried out as quickly as might be after the death of the testator, and the estate was to remain under the control and guardianship of such only as the girl appointed.

Special bequests to the artist, physician, and old servants of the castle and estate were named; and then the will closed with this brief but startling clause:

"To Basil La Mort, who has disgraced his blood, abused my kindness, and betrayed every trust I ever reposed in him, I leave one franc. It will buy him a rope wherewith to save the public executioner trouble on his account. He can hang himself!"

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

A curse, wild and bitter, broke from the young man as the notary read these words, and turning to Adeline Cherchille he said:

"You it is who have excited the old man to this. Beware! You shall weep tears of blood before you die! No heir but myself shall tread these ancient halls. I swear it! He is dying and the will not signed! Ha, ha! I'll conquer yet!"

The old marquis, who had sunk back exhausted, roused up as the young villain uttered this exultant cry.

"No, no!" he gasped. "The will shall be signed. I am yet strong enough in mind and body for that," and to the astonishment of all he actually rose from his chair, stepped three paces to the table, took the pen from the hand of the notary, and signed the will without apparent effort.

"Witness, all!" he said, and he handed the pen to the physician.

He watched while the doctor and the artist signed their names, then he attempted to regain his chair. But Nature had given her last assistance, his will failed, and staggering back he fell into the arms of the young painter. A second he gasped, then all was over. He was dead.

Adeline wept as she bowed her face above his white head, but she was roused to one bitter burst of indignation when Basil La Mort cried out:

"I am now the Marquis of Omohundro!"

"Liar and murderer, begone!" she cried. "Begone, or I will have you scourged from the presence of the dead!"

"I go!" he said—"I go to mature revenge that shall be sweeter to me than the hope your beggar painter has long matured in his breast to call you wife."

The words had barely left his lips ere the clenched hand of the "beggar painter" dealt him a blow which sent him staggering from the room.

"Oh, Edouard, he will murder you!" cried the fair girl.

"The coward dare not raise a hand to me! He can threaten you, but he dare not attempt to harm you!" was the young artist's reply.

The dramatic scene was ended by the entrance of many old retainers and servants of the dead marquis.

CHAPTER II.

TEXAS JACK IN TROUBLE.

TRAILED, and by a hundred of the fiends! Now, good angels help me!"

This was the utterance of a young man, nobly formed, clad in the picturesque buckskin garb worn by the hunter-scouts of the Far West, armed with bowie-knife, revolver, and rifle, and mounted on a splendid horse of mixed American and mustang stock. He had just risen to the crest of a sandy ridge near the base of the famous Black Hills, and

Texas Jack in Trouble.

looking back he saw a large body of Indians riding in column swiftly along the very route by which he had come. They were on his track.

"If I had but fifty of my brave Pawnees, I would not turn my back on a hundred of those cowardly Sioux. But alone there is no use to show fight till I am cornered. Then it will be fight and die! Forward, Duke! it is your speed alone which can get me out of this scrape. There is cover, but it is twenty miles ahead. Go, my good steed—go, for the red men see us."

The noble horse seemed to understand its brave master's talk, or his needs, for without touch or spur, or even a loud word, it sprang forward on a long bounding lope, which would carry its handsome rider rapidly towards the only shelter in sight, the wooded cliff of the great Black Hills.

A mile or more was passed, and another low ridge was crested, when the hunter looked back and saw that the Indian band, at full speed, was gaining upon him.

"Faster, good Duke, faster," he cried, and now the spur touched the flanks of the gallant horse. "Forty miles to-day I know have tried you somewhat, but we must reach the hills yonder or go under!"

The horse responded nobly to the touch of his heel, and sped on at a gait which showed a gain upon the red pursuers when the scout next looked back. But as wolves follow the deer, so the red fiends kept on tirelessly, and when about half the distance to the tree-crowned hills was done more than half of them were yet nearer than when the white rider first discovered them.

No look of fear was on that brave rider's face, but his set lips and flashing eyes told full well his knowledge that the chance was desperate.

The repeating-rifle which had been slung at his back was now brought forward ready for use, but his horse, still urged to the uttermost, kept him out of range of the pursuing foe. But the foam-flakes falling from its mouth, the trembling of the over-strained limbs, told the scout plainly that the race could not last long. Either the Indians must tire soon, or he would not be able to reach the timber where fight or concealment would be more available.

Nearer and nearer to the hills, the trees rising at every leap of the faithful horse, but nearer, too, the bloodhounds in the rear.

The paleface fugitive, who had looked back but little at the start, now kept an almost constant eye over his shoulder.

"The brutes keep well together!" he muttered. "If they were more scattered, I'd rest my horse and take ten or a dozen of them down at long range. But to stop now would bring the lot all too close. Good Duke, keep up, if you can, two miles more, and then you shall rest!"

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

The horse, goaded again by the spur, renewed its struggle, and for a little time it once more gained upon the foe. Yet they were now so close that their yells, borne upon the brisk east wind, reached the hunter's ears.

"They think they have me," he muttered. "If they have, they'll find me a hard nut to crack. More than one yelling fiend will eat lead for his supper before I go under! On, on, good Duke, we may beat them yet!"

The horse, apparently cheered by its master's voice, gave a few mighty bounds, and the rider, surprised and rejoicing, thinking he would surely gain the hills in advance of the red-skins, shouted out a wild defiance to the demons of the plains.

Alas! like many a triumph, his seemed short-lived, for the horse fell suddenly to the earth and, with a groan as if its heart had burst, quivered in the agony of death.

The bold rider did not flinch. As the horse staggered and fell he left his stirrups and stood firm upon the ground, facing the coming foe as coolly as if a large force of men were at his back.

"Come, you red fiends, come!" he said bitterly. "Yell your loudest while you can, for more than one will yell his last ere Texas Jack goes under!"

The Indians, still a little beyond rifle-range, yelled wildly when they saw the horse of the brave scout fall, for now they felt sure of a victim. He was too far from cover to hope to reach it on foot before they could surround him, or, charging down, overwhelm him with numbers.

But, cunningly, they halted to breathe and rest their horses, so that they could charge at full speed when ready, and thus distract an aim which they were confident would be deadly, for they knew well whom they were following—the great "Whirling Rope of the Prairie," as they called him, from his known expertness at throwing the lasso over man or beast—and they knew that with rifle or revolver he had no superior, not even in his great pard of the plains, Buffalo Bill. To "wipe him out" would be to relieve themselves of one of their most dreaded enemies, and to take from their hereditary foes, the Red Pawnees, a chief and leader whom the latter almost idolised.

The halt gave Texas Jack time to dig a shallow pit with his broad-bladed hunting-knife in the sand behind his fallen steed, so that he could cover all but his head and shoulders from their balls and arrows when they should swoop down upon him, and also have a better chance for defence in what must come—the hand-to-hand conflict—for he knew their numbers, as well as their hate, would bring them to that.

Coolly laying his two revolvers and a handful of extra rifle cartridges on the side of his dead horse, so as to have them in reach, the hero-scout cocked his trusty rifle, took a draught of cold water from his canteen, and waited.

Texas Jack in Trouble.

"I'd like to have Bill Cody see this bit of a fight!" muttered Texas Jack. "He and I have been in some tough places and got out, but this looks squally. I think I can lay out about two dozen of the red brutes before they get too heavy, for they'll come all in a heap, I reckon; so I'll not waste a shot. I'd give all my chances for just ten of my brave Pawnees; but they're not here, so there's no use in wishing. It is fight, and nothing else for me. Well, thank Heaven, I'm used to it. I learned the trade young, and—— Hallo! the fiends are mounting!"

The Indians, who had been holding a consultation while they rested their animals, were now seen by Texas Jack to mount and extend their line.

"They'll not come in a lump," he muttered in a tone of disappointment. "So much the worse for me! I'll have to make slow shooting to be sure."

Extending their line and throwing their wings forward, till it assumed a crescent shape, the mounted redskins rode forward slowly, as if to save their horses for a rush the moment they were in range.

"Thirty-three. There's luck in odd numbers, and the luck is with them," muttered Jack, easily counting them in a line. "How cool they take it! They think they've got a dead-sure thing on me. Maybe they have—but somehow I don't believe it. I don't feel the 'chill' on me half as bad as I have done in other places."

The Indians, with their ponies at a walk, were now so near that those on the wings were in range; and as quietly as if picking out one elk from a herd for his supper, Texas Jack took sight over his rifle for the nearest. Scarce had he raised the barrel ere he pressed the trigger, and a second later the Indian warrior went toppling from his horse with the death-yell on his lips.

Another fatal shot, and then the Indians, knowing that speed only could help to disarrange the white man's fatal aim, gave the charging shout, and closing up came at a wild gallop down upon the heroic scout.

Shot after shot, so fast that his rifle streamed fire, told how well he knew his work, and at every shot a warrior went reeling from his horse. Still on they came, a yelling pack of fiends, firing as they advanced; but with such poor aim that when the scout dropped his rifle, snatching a revolver with either hand, he was yet unharmed, though twenty of the enemy were now close upon him.

With a yell as loud and wild as their fiercest cry, the brave man rose fairly from the pit where he had sheltered himself, and, standing on the body of his dead horse, poured out a deadly fire from both revolvers. But even this did not check the terrible onslaught of the Sioux, who seemed intent on taking his life, if but one remained to do it. On they came,

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

some falling, but others springing to the front—and now Texas Jack felt the burning pain of wounds.

At the same instant he heard wild war-whoops close in his rear, and he felt that his time was come. But a cry in the Pawnee tongue nerved his heart once more, for he knew then that friends, not foes, were close behind.

Obedient to a warning shout he fell headlong in the pit behind his horse, while a second later a shower of rifle-balls whistled close above his head, sweeping down the Sioux to a man as they halted, panic-stricken, before foes which seemed to have come like clouds before a gale to the rescue of the paleface.

Texas Jack saw a score of red forms leaping past and over him—he heard a few scattering shots and crunching blows, and then the terrible scalp-cries of the Red Pawnees told him that the Sioux, even in the moment of anticipated victory over him, had met defeat and death. He staggered to his feet, bleeding from two flesh-wounds, to see Big Elk, the Pawnee chief, standing by his side, while his warriors were tearing the scalps from their fallen enemies.

“So! My brother was in a hot place. The Pawnees heard his rifle speak, and came to help him when he needed them. The Sioux dogs have been driven off.”

“Big Elk and his braves did come at the right time,” said Texas Jack. “The Great Spirit sent them; for it is not written that the Sioux shall take my scalp. Alone I defied them. Many of them went down before my rifle; but they were hungry for my life, and I was looking in the clouds when I heard the war-cry of the Pawnee braves. I owe Big Elk a life. Some day I may pay the debt.”

“My brother owes the Pawnees nothing. He is their friend and brother. He has led them in their great hunts—he has fought for them in their wars. They will fight for him while grass grows or water runs. My brother's horse is dead. He shall have the best that Big Elk owns. The Pawnees will lift the scalps of many Sioux to-day, and it is the Whirling Rope who gave them to us.”

The chief soon called his warriors in, and their horses were brought up from the rear, where they had been left when the Pawnee band had crept over a ridge to see who was battling in their front.

The wounds of Texas Jack were quickly dressed; then, mounting with the others, he rode towards their hunting camp not far away.

The main force of Sioux, who were scattered far back on the trail, were too much disheartened when they reached the battle-ground to follow up the victorious Pawnees; and Texas Jack found rest with old and tried friends—the only Indians in that section who were not treacherous and hostile even under the peace-flag.

CHAPTER III.

THE RED BROTHERHOOD.

HALLO, Bill! How have affairs gone with you since I've been out?"

This was the salute of Texas Jack, on his return from his scout to the Big Hills, meeting Buffalo Bill near the latter's lovely little home near Fort McPherson.

"Things have been quiet, Jack," replied Buffalo Bill. "Half a dozen hunts, but nothing more than game in the way. You look pale—have you been ill?"

"I lost a little blood the other day. Had a brush with a gang of cowardly Sioux. I'd have gone under if Big Elk, the Pawnee, hadn't happened that way just in time. What is the news? Any scouting trips projected?"

"I don't know. I've been sent for from headquarters, and shall go up in a few minutes."

"Good! I'll go along with you, for I've a report to make. Hallo! there comes a Pawnee, riding as if Old Nick had kicked him."

A minute later the Indian spoken of reined in his panting horse at a signal from Texas Jack, who asked what hurried him so.

"Me got report for Big Father at fort," said the Pawnee. "Train on railroad been stopped below, wires cut from poles by bad white men dressed all same as Pawnees. Lots of money, and some white squaws carried off. Must go quick, so soldiers can chase."

The Indian said no more, but spurred his horse into a gallop and went on towards the fort.

"We'd better mount and hurry up," said Buffalo Bill. "If that Pawnee doesn't lie there's work for us as well as the cavalry."

"The Pawnees may lie among themselves, but they know better than to tell me a crooked story," said Texas Jack as he sprang to his horse.

Buffalo Bill took an instant only to say a word to his dear ones in the house, while one of his men saddled his horse, Powder Face; then, snatching his arms, he sprang into the saddle, and side by side with Texas Jack galloped to the fort.

The bugles were calling "boots and saddles" when the two scouts rode down the street in front of headquarters.

The general was out himself giving verbal orders to several of his officers.

"You are just in time," he said as the scouts dashed up. "While the troops form, the Pawnee will tell you where the trail can be taken of a body of men who have committed one of the most daring outrages on record. They must be

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

followed, their captives rescued, and the thieves themselves exterminated. The slow course of civil law will never bring justice in a case like this, and the officer who leads the expedition will not be troubled with orders to encumber himself with prisoners. Talk to the Pawnee, Cody, and get ready to guide the troops. They will carry no forage, and only scant rations, for they must go light to insure speed."

Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack bowed their heads to signify that the orders were understood, and then rode up to where the Pawnee was putting his saddle and bridle on a fresh horse—a far better animal than the one he came in on.

"We are to go with you to guide the troops. Where were the cars stopped?" asked Texas Jack; talking to the Pawnee in his own tongue.

"Down the big river—a half-sun's swift ride. This side of Long-tree Island."

"How many men did the trick?"

"Me not know. A big heap. So railwaymen say."

"Did they kill anyone?"

"Yes—a few men that show fight. They carry away about so many handsome white squaws, and heaps of money."

The Pawnee held up all his fingers to show how many white women had been made captives.

"It isn't anything more than I've expected ever since the road opened," said Buffalo Bill. "As civilisation advances, gambling and thieving in the border towns plays out, and the rascals that used to live that way have to scratch hard to keep from starvation. They've got linked in a gang, got some smart leader, and now they play Indian with more than Indian ugliness, while they know better how to throw off trains than the reds do. This will not be the last work of this kind."

"It will be of this gang, if we only overhaul them," said Texas Jack. "You heard the general? They're to be wiped out."

"Yes, but we must catch before we wipe out. When was this work done?"

The question was asked of the Pawnee.

"Last night, when moon was going down."

"Well, in that case they've got a big start. If they know what they are about they will keep us days on the trail or throw us off altogether."

"I'd like to see them that can do that," said Texas Jack. "It isn't in my line to lose a trail after I take it. But we've both had trails washed out by a prairie storm, and if one isn't brewing now I'm no judge of signs."

"It may be forty hours off yet," said Buffalo Bill quietly. "Do you see what they are doing on the Parade?"

"Yes, forming company lines. A full battalion must be going out. More than that, for don't you see the extra

The Red Brotherhood.

horses coming in from the corral? This is going to be fast work and no stopping. A change of horses for every man."

"That's sensible, and I'll have a couple of my best extra ponies for you and me," said Buffalo Bill.

A moment later he gave the order to one of his scouts who rode up to know whether he (Buffalo Bill) was going with the soldiers.

Only about half an hour had passed since the Pawnee had brought the news when the full cavalry battalion, headed by the two scouts and the Pawnee, passed out of the gates at a gallop to take the trail of the robbers and murderers.

* * * * *

In Omaha, in a dingy building near the Pacific Railway slope—so near that the smoke from the locomotives made it black and rusty—a large party of men had assembled in a hall which was apparently used as a smoking and sitting room. For it was filled with old stools and chairs, its closed window curtains were black and dingy with smoke, and the few pictures on the walls were so dirt-stained as to be indiscernible.

The men were a motley-looking set of all nationalities. In one thing only did they have a resemblance—they all appeared to be ruffians of the worst kind.

"I wonder where the captain and his lieutenant are?" said one. "I'm tired of lazing around here, and when we were engaged by them they said we should be on the plains inside of a week. More than that time has passed, and we are here yet."

"Cuss the odds!" said another. "We've had all the rum we wanted, plenty to eat, and plenty to smoke. I'd as soon it would last a year like this as to see a change!" cried a fat, rough-looking man.

"Yes, Jim Bulger, because laziness is a virtue with you. Why, boys, when him and me were over on the Sweet Water our cabin took fire, and he was so lazy he wouldn't get out of bed till the roof was just tumbling in."

"Well, 'twas a cold night, and I didn't want to dress till it got nice and warm," said Jim.

The conversation fell, and there was a dead silence in the room as a singular knock was heard at the door.

"The captain!" said a man, and he turned the key from the inside, opened the door, and admitted the one who had knocked. "And his lieutenant," he added, as a second person followed the first.

The first was a Frenchman named Jacques Lasalle. The second was Basil La Mort, whom we last saw in the castle at Avignon. Both wore slouch hats, well drawn down, and huge cloaks.

"Gentlemen, news has reached me, and we are ready to move," said Lasalle as the crowd massed up before him.

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

"Good! That is talk!" cried the one who had accused Jim Bulger of being lazy.

"It is time that you all fully understood what lay you are going on, so that there need be no grumbling by-and-by," said Lasalle. "Anyone who wants to back out now can do it, but after we leave here there will be no deserting. The man who tries it, with our secrets in his possession, will go under!"

"Yes, that must be understood now," put in Basil La Mort. "Explain all the plan, Captain Lasalle."

"Not till the oath is taken by every man here," said the chief. "Form in a circle about me, bend one knee, and raise your right hands."

The men obeyed. Then in a deep, stern voice the leader slowly repeated a terrible oath—so terrible that almost every man shuddered as if he were drawing the curse of Heaven down upon himself. Yet every one took that oath to keep secret what was now to be revealed and all future plans of what their leader named as the "Red Brotherhood." When it was taken they all rose to their feet, and then Lasalle said:

"Brothers, bound by ties you dare not break, now hear me! He who shrinks from the future can now leave, bound only to secrecy. We are about to enter on a life of defiance to all law, to become free rovers of the plains and mountains, with our hands against all men but ourselves, knowing that the hands of all men will be against us. But we can lead independent, reckless lives, revelling in new pleasures, gathering up limitless wealth, meeting peril only to overcome it.

"In boxes already packed and on the cars, to be left as a trading outfit at a small station some distance up the road, there are full Indian rigs for every man, and some to spare, with lots of paints and feathers. Boxes of arms and ammunition are also there, while at a corral near where we disembark from the train horses have been gathered to serve the need of every man. Now, we leave here as peaceable colonists about to settle in one of the Platte valleys. We must go quietly, talking over 'farming prospects' and all that. Once disembarked, where we will meet the men I have sent ahead, we will don our new uniforms—the regular wear of the Red Brotherhood—and as painted Indians take the warpath. Our first exploit will be to stop a passenger-train on the railway, seize all the treasure, take every article of jewellery and as many pretty women as we want for wives, and then strike for another section. I know every foot of the country, a thousand safe hiding-places, and have the art to hide our track when pursuit is made. How do you like my plan?"

"Glorious! It can't be beat!" came as with one universal shout from all.

The Red Brotherhood.

"Then we are united. Now, understand, in the matter of plunder, we will share equally, man and man. In regard to prisoners, I first and the lieutenant next shall have choice. And his and my orders shall be law to all. Are you content?"

"We are!" cried the ruffians.

"Then be ready as soon as possible. To save appearances I have chartered cars on an emigrant train, for no suspicion of what we are must get out until we are on our horses, with arms in our hands; then we will defy the world!"

A hearty cheer broke from the men, but Lasalle hushed them down.

"Keep quiet, men!" he said, with a smile. "Such noise might cause our movements to be watched. Let us get out of this place as quickly as we can. Even while we are getting away from here to the place where we will form and prepare for our first act of warfare on the world at large the train that I intend to sack is thundering towards us from the far East. We must be ready when it comes. All my plans are well laid. I have trusty men to keep me posted, all of them bound by the same oath you have taken. We cannot fail."

* * * * *

A few words will suffice to explain on what mission the chiefs of the Red Brotherhood were bent. When Basil La Mort quitted Omohundro's castle in France, as related in the first chapter, he swore a deep oath of vengeance and at once sought the counsel and aid of a scoundrel acquaintance. This man was Jacques Lassalle, and together they plotted to follow the movements of Adeline Cherchille and her friends in order to frustrate them in their endeavours to find Jean Omohundro, to whom the old marquis had left his title and estates.

So it came about that when shortly afterwards Adeline formed a party to accompany her to America the fact was known to her enemies. Cunningly disguised, they booked passages and went on the same vessel that carried the girl and her friends.

Arriving at an Eastern city, Miss Cherchille's party stayed there for several weeks to gather information that might lead to the success of their mission, and then started their long train journey to the Wild West. But Basil La Mort and Jacques Lasalle, having learnt their exact intentions, had preceded them thither and laid cunning plans for their capture.

Many years previously Lasalle had been the chief of a band of outlaws in America, and on returning there he lost no time in getting in touch with his erstwhile confederates. Thus the Red Brotherhood was quickly formed, the French captain's object being to work on his own account as well as on behalf of Basil La Mort.

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

As Lasalle had told his men, the doomed train was already on its way. Further and further towards the region of sunset, nearer and nearer to the great rock-chain of the continent, the swift express of the Great Pacific Railway thundered on, containing a full load of passengers, the usual wealth of express matter, the mails, and yet no guard to protect it if white robbers or red savages should check its progress.

On this train rode Adeline Cherchille, the young artist Edouard de Carle, and a beautiful woman named Lucille Breton and her husband. The two last-named were trusted friends of Adeline who had offered to come to the Far West as her attendants on the mission on which she was bound—namely, the finding of her cousin Jean Omohundro.

“Before day dawns again,” said Edouard de Carle to Adeline, “we shall have reached the end of our railway journey.”

“I am glad,” said Adeline. “I am weary of travel. The eternal jar and rumble of this train wears my very spirit down. And this suspense, this continual looking for my cousin, and the dread of that other——”

“You mean Basil La Mort?”

“Yes. The dread that he is near to work some evil lies like an icy chill upon my heart.”

“Fear not, dear lady. Ever on the alert, ready to die in your defence, I will shield you from aught that he may attempt,” said Edouard.

“Yes, kindest of friends and truest of men, you will do all that you can do. But dark treachery is ever active when least expected. I feel all the time as if La Mort were plotting your destruction and my misery.”

Night had closed in, the lamps in the cars were alight, and human vision could scarcely reach beyond their glimmer as the train swept swiftly on.

Suddenly there was a shrill shriek from the whistle of the locomotive. Another and another, and the brakemen hurried to their posts to stop the train, and a cry came back from the conductor's lips:

“A red light ahead! There is something the matter with the track!”

In an instant all was commotion on the cars, but they soon came to a stand, and all seemed safe. Suddenly terrible yells rent the air. Shots and loud outcries from the forward part of the train reached the ears of the terror-stricken passengers, and the words, “Indians!—the horrible Indians!” broke from many a white lip.

And in a second more it seemed as if the redskins lined the road on each hand, while a low voice, speaking in plain English, but with a foreign accent, shouted:

The Red Brotherhood.

"Don't make the least resistance, or every man, woman, and child shall die! Let the Indians have their way and take what plunder they will, and life shall be spared. Keep to your seats! He or she who leaves a car unbidden dies on the spot!"

Terror-bound, the passengers sank back upon their seats, while a few Indians, painted in horrible style, passed into and along the cars, taking money, watches, jewellery—everything of value they could see.

The passengers, thankful for life, yielded their property, glad that the red fiends seemed satisfied with that. But after all had been robbed by one gang, another band of savages came in, and now shrieks rang out upon the midnight air, for these, selecting the prettiest women from among them all, bade them rise and follow. Then brave men rose to resist this wrong, but were quickly stricken down by merciless hands, and the wretched women were dragged shrieking from the cars.

When the pretended redskins reached the car where Adeline Cherchille was seated, with Lucille Breton weeping near by, Edouard de Carle and Alsace Breton, the husband of Lucille, sprang before them.

"Down with the beggarly artist!" cried a voice.

"Hound, out of my way!" shouted another as he struck Alsace Breton a fearful blow which sent him down senseless in the car.

"Oh, spare him! spare him!" shrieked Lucille, springing to her husband's side.

"You, Mrs. Breton, are for me!" shouted Jacques Lasalle.

"And you, heiress of Omohundro, are for me!" echoed Basil La Mort, striking Edouard de Carle down with a rifle-butt and grasping the fainting form of poor Adeline in his strong arms.

Then, a minute later, the red fiends left the cars, while horses were seen to be led up, some to use for riding and others to carry the booty.

A great fire was made, by the light of which the plunder was packed, and then the captive women, weeping and sobbing, were placed on horses and tied there, and their captors, with hands red with many murders, mounted to escort them, Heaven alone knew whither.

Not an hour had passed since the train was stopped when the Indians—or painted white men as of course they were—had gone, and only the dead engineers and conductor, and a few who first met and resisted the attack, also dead, with the wounded and plundered living, were left as proof of the terrible deed.

Nearly twenty women, young and fair, had been dragged away, more than that number of brave men lay dead, but

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

unscalped, on the ground or in the cars, and as many more with fearful wounds groaned in agony on the train.

Suffering most of all in body and in mind, yet living and likely to live, lay Edouard de Carle and Alsace Breton—agonised to think that the two women they loved most on earth were in the power of fiends, who doubtless had concocted the whole of this terrible plot.

Those who were able sought to aid the others who had survived, and as soon as possible a messenger was sent for help to the nearest military post. This messenger we have met. Now for the issue.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE TRACK OF THE RAIDERS.

WHEN the major in command of the military expedition reached the scene of the outrage the train was still there, for, the driver and fireman having been killed, there was no one to run the locomotive. But other trains from East to West had now come up, and the cars of the raided train were attached to these and taken on their journey.

But a large number of passengers who had lost female relatives and all their property stayed behind, while some that were wounded could not go on, but were kept in a temporary hospital, which was made by taking one of the cars off the track and leaving it on one side.

The officer did not halt there many minutes. He merely made inquiries as to the supposed number of the men who had stopped and robbed the train, whether any of them were Indians—for he had been told that many of the robbers, if not all, were white men in disguise. Having learnt all he could, he mounted his men and took the trail of the wretches and their unhappy captives. It was easy to find this, for over one hundred horses had made it.

Texas Jack despatched the Pawnee messenger to Big Elk's village, asking for fifty braves to at once follow the soldiers in their work of rescue. Then he and Buffalo Bill rode at the head of the pursuing column as guides and scouts, and so long as light lasted the troops made excellent speed. But night closed in upon them before they had ridden many miles from the railway, closed in dark and cloudy. Worst of all, when night fairly set in there was every appearance of a tempest.

"Do you think the storm will come before morning?" asked the major, halting his men and addressing Texas Jack.

"Yes, sir, and before midnight. We've a hard night ahead. The worst will be to lose the trail if it rains heavily. I would have given my left arm almost for just light enough to reach the timber belt ten miles ahead. There, I think,

On the Track of the Raiders.

the men we pursue will rest, for, if they know the plains well, they've seen storm signs hours ago, and will stay where they can get shelter."

"If I thought they were there I'd keep on, dark as it is, storm or no storm," said the major.

"The horses are tired, but a slow pace could be kept up all night," said Buffalo Bill. "I pity those women. If female relatives of mine were there, nothing on earth would make me halt."

"Then we will move. Fortunately, I have a lantern—one of the pocket kind—by which we may see the compass now and then."

The officer thereupon gave the order to resume the march. Close in column of fours the soldiers rode, the horses guided more by ear than sight, for the darkness was so dense that in a little while no man could see the file nearest him. Then a quick, vivid flash of lightning quivered along the horizon, and thunder was heard booming away in the distance.

More frequent became the flashes of lightning, closer and louder the thunder-peals, until it seemed that the storm would soon break heavily upon them in the weary night-march. But fortunately the rain held off.

It should be mentioned here that Edouard de Carle, the young artist, had recovered from the blow delivered him by Basil La Mort at the time of the attack upon the train, and he had told Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack just what mission had brought Adeline Cherchille, himself, and others of the girl's party to the Far West. Needless to say, the scouts were amazed at the disclosure, and at once agreed when Edouard stated his determination to accompany them on the trail of the raiders.

All three were riding some distance in advance of the soldiers when Texas Jack suddenly cried:

"Halt! I heard the neigh of a horse close ahead. It could not come from our command, for we lead."

"I hear the tramp of many horses," said Buffalo Bill.

"We will soon overtake them," gritted Texas Jack as he urged his horse forward into a narrow defile between two clumps of thorny bushes.

Edouard de Carle, who was close behind him, saw Texas Jack turn a sharp angle. The next instant he heard a sound as if the horse of the scout had stumbled or fallen, and, closely followed by Buffalo Bill, he turned the same angle in the trail.

The young artist then got a glimpse of Texas Jack on the ground, with a man bending over him, just as a crashing blow fell upon his own head and struck him senseless from his horse; and then all was darkness. Buffalo Bill suffered the same fate.

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

"This luck is too good to believe!" cried Lasalle as he stood over the three men thus disabled without having been able to return a blow, struck down from their horses by the butts of rifles in his hands and those of his concealed fellow-scoundrels. "La Mort will go wild with joy and surprise to find two of these men in his power," he added. "Bind them securely, for we will hold them in our hands. It may save us, if we are close pressed, to have such hostages."

The men who stood over the stunned and helpless scouts quickly took their arms out of reach and bound their hands securely behind them. This done, they lifted them upon their horses, and there so fastened them that they could not fall; and, mounting their own horses, riding on each side of the prisoners to hold them up, they pressed on after the main body. These had been halted by La Mort when he saw that Lasalle had fallen back with a few of his men, but an order which was thundered out by the latter to move on when he came up to the rear was hurriedly obeyed.

Several hours went by, during which the raiders made rapid progress towards their destination. By the time day dawned Texas Jack and Buffalo Bill, stronger than the young artist, had recovered from the blows which had stunned them so far as to know that they were prisoners, disarmed, bound, and helpless.

"Bill, how on earth did this come about?"

These were the first words uttered by Texas Jack.

"It's a conundrum to me," muttered Buffalo Bill. "The first thing that I knew, I knew nothing. We're in a bad fix."

"We might be in a worse one. I wonder what the scoundrels have spared us for?"

"I can't see. Look at the women ahead. Oh, the fiends!"

"What, Bill? You call women fiends?"

"I didn't mean them, Jack, and you know it. I meant those villains in war-paint and feathers that have dragged them off!"

"You're a civil-spoken young man, you are!" said Lasalle, who had listened to this brief colloquy. "The smoother you carry yourself the softer will be the bed you lie down on."

"It's Jack Lasalle himself!" cried Texas Jack. "The outlaw chief who played havoc on the trails a year or so ago."

"Yes, you know me, I see. You'll be apt to know me better before we part. Now, answer me a question or two: How many men are on our trail?"

"There are two hundred cavalrymen on your trail, besides fifty of my Pawnees, and they'll hang there till you are overtaken."

"They may overtake me in a place they'll not like," said Lasalle; "that is, if I allow myself to be overtaken."

On the Track of the Raiders.

Edouard de Carle now came to his senses, and he shuddered when he saw the hideous painted faces and forms about him.

"Are we prisoners?" he gasped.

"Yes. You had better have stayed in France. Your friend La Mort rides at the head of this column. Ah! he is dropping back. I expect he has discovered that we've got an addition to our ranks."

La Mort had indeed fallen back in the line, leaving another to head the march. As he rode up to Lasalle his eyes fell upon Texas Jack.

"By Heaven, it is he!" he said. "Yes, that is the man who would step in between me and my heritage. He shall die the death."

The hand of La Mort reached to his belt and was on a pistol the next second.

"Hold on, lieutenant! There is no shooting to be done until I order it. Take one good look at my prisoners and then ride forward to your station!" cried Lasalle.

"Edouard de Carle, too! I thought I had split his skull open on the cars," said the villain. "I'll make sure next time. But I am glad he lives, for now he shall die by inches!"

"That will do for the present, lieutenant! To your station, sir—to your station, and push on at your best speed, for we must keep out of the way of our pursuers till we reach a place fit to fight in. We'll be there soon, I reckon, if you keep going."

La Mort hated to go on, but he knew Lasalle's temper too well to disobey him, and casting a look of hate at Texas Jack and the young artist he spurred back to his place at the head of the column.

"A bitter pill, that La Mort. If I had not been here, two of you would now be past praying for," said Lasalle, quietly addressing the prisoners.

"You'll be past praying for, I guess, in the very near future," said Texas Jack.

By the early morning light he had caught sight of some of his Pawnees on a hill not more than a couple of miles in his rear.

"When I go you'll keep me company, young man, so feel easy," replied Lasalle.

But he, too, had seen how near the pursuers were, and he sent one of his men, Mormon Ben, forward to tell La Mort to ride at full speed till he was ordered to lessen it.

Mormon Ben went ahead and gave the order, and then fell back to his place.

No word was spoken for about an hour, and then Lasalle himself broke the silence. They were rising a long ascent and had a clear view for miles back. The Pawnees had lost ground, while to their rear the troops could barely be seen.

"You see their stock isn't up to ours," said Lasalle, smiling.

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

Then he sent an order on to La Mort to take the ascent at a more easy gait so as to breathe his horses.

"We must keep on until darkness again sets in," he said. "Then I think I'll bother those who follow. If they know this country any better than I do, they are smart. I doubt it, anyway."

All this time, in agony of thought and suspense, Edouard de Carle was looking among the forms of the women in front for the figure of Adeline as well as that of poor Lucille, for he thought he would surely know them, no matter how far away, if only in sight. In vain his eyes wandered along the line. He could not see one form that appeared like that of Adeline. At last, his suspense too cruel to be held in check, he turned to Lasalle.

"Tell me," he asked, "how the lady Adeline Cherchille is? I do not see her before us."

A fiendish smile was on the outlaw's face.

"Your eyesight is poor, young man," he said. "When you have shed as many tears as they have, it may be better."

"They are not there. They may have escaped. Heaven grant that it is the case," thought the young artist.

But prudence forbade his speaking the thought aloud.

Having arrived nearly at the top of the hill, the column entered a line of timber, and Lasalle was obliged to go forward to give new directions as to the course. But before he had left he placed Mormon Ben in charge of the rearguard, with orders to keep a keen watch upon the prisoners and see that the column was kept close up.

Mormon Ben, with quite an air of importance, ordered two of his men to ride side by side with Texas Jack and the young artist, while he rather checked the horse of Buffalo Bill, so that it should keep pace with his own in the extreme rear.

Presently, unnoticed by the rest, he made a peculiar and significant sign to Buffalo Bill which caused the latter to look at him with astonishment, for it was the sign of a secret brotherhood to which he belonged.

"I can't return that with my hands tied," said the scout in a low tone. "But I am in need of help."

"Ay; I know it better than you," said Mormon Ben. "You helped me once, and I haven't forgotten it."

"I never saw you before that I know of."

"Yes, you did—when you were only a boy, teaming for General Johnston's army when he invaded Utah. I was in the guard-house near Salt Lake, sentenced to be hanged, when a young girl, who told you she was my sister, begged you to carry me a small bundle unseen by anyone else. Do you forget?"

"No. I remember the girl now. She was pretty, and I pitied her—she cried so."

On the Track of the Raiders.

"Yes, she was good on the cry, Sally was. I never knew but one Sally that wasn't. No matter—that bundle gave me my liberty, for I filed off my irons and slid. They couldn't hang me, for I wasn't there when I was wanted. Now, I shall help you when I can safely do it. Keep cool and wait."

"You must help my friends if you help me," said Buffalo Bill in a firm tone. "I wouldn't thank you for any favour that they did not share."

Buffalo Bill looked towards Texas Jack and Carle as he spoke.

"I'll do all I can; but be careful. I may be watched, and I shall have to be as rough as the roughest to all appearances."

"All right," said Buffalo Bill. "But answer me one question: How did you become a member of a league to which only good and true men should belong?"

"I joined the league before I became what I am. But I am an outlaw now and intend to remain so. I am only helping you for old times' sake. My hand is, and always will be, against others of your kind. But we must hurry up; the column is getting ahead of us."

Buffalo Bill looked back as Mormon Ben touched both the horses with a switch torn from a branch. Neither troops nor Pawnees were in sight now. He sighed, for he knew that the horses of those in pursuit were well-nigh used up by the long continued march.

Mormon Ben read the meaning of both look and sigh, and said:

"Don't fret. If we keep on until another night you'll have free hands—you and your friends, too, and a chance to drop from your horses and get out of the line, as two of the women did last night."

"Ah! Have two escaped? Then the young artist was right. He missed the two he most wanted to see."

"Be still. Give no sign or word to them that you know this, or that scamp Lasalle will overhaul me and put it out of my power to help you."

"Mum is the word," said Buffalo Bill. "I'll keep my lips as close as an old bachelor's purse."

The patch of timber cresting the hill was not large, and soon the column, now headed by Lasalle and La Mort, passed through it, coming into a singular region, a section of rocky hills, ravines, and chasms, almost entirely devoid of grass and bushes, looking arid and red.

"Have you ever been here before?" asked Buffalo Bill, still riding by the side of Mormon Ben.

"No. Have you?"

"Yes; once. I got separated from my party once in a fight we had, when all our chances were to scatter, and

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

came into this country, and a hard road it is to travel. The horse that drinks the waters to be found in these hills will die; they are full of arsenic."

"A little arsenic will fatten a horse. But if the water is bad horses will not drink it."

"Not without they are very dry, as mine was, when he drank and I lost him."

At this moment a man who had been sent by Lasalle to convey orders along the line was approaching the rear-guard.

"The captain says no horse must be allowed to touch water till we reach timber again," said this man. "The water hereabouts is deadly poison."

"You see, our boss knows almost everything," said Mormon Ben. "He has been all through this country. I heard him say so. I never saw his equal. The other chap who's acting as lieutenant isn't worth chucks, only to put on airs. But all the men are afraid of Lasalle."

"I've heard of him before," said Buffalo Bill. "Texas Jack knows him, and says he is a regular fire-eater. If he was dropped off, your gang wouldn't amount to much."

"I don't know. They're a hard crowd all through. Rake all the prisons in the West with a fine-tooth comb and you couldn't get a harder set. There isn't one who'd stop to think before he did a murder, and as to robbing, they're almost all old at it. But ride up, mate—night is close to us. I wish the cap'n would send the lieutenant back to take charge of the rearguard, so that he'd get the blame should you be missed."

"I guess he is doing that now, for, see, La Mort has halted by the side of the column."

"So he has. Here, take this knife; I'll shove it inside your shirt. Keep your hands behind you still—though I'll cut the knot. It will be dark soon, and then you must work for liberty yourself, and free your friends if you can."

Mormon Ben was as quick in his actions as his words. A knife was thrust inside of Buffalo Bill's buckskin hunting-shirt, and the thongs which bound his hands were severed in a second.

When the rearguard arrived where La Mort had halted the latter sulkily said to Mormon Ben:

"It is the captain's orders that you join him in the advance. I'll take charge here."

"All right, lieutenant. I'd rather be there than here. Them captives had better be kept in a lump, the three together—they'll be easier watched."

Buffalo Bill understood this hint, and touching his horse with his heel it joined the other two.

La Mort, evidently preferring to be alone, brought up the

On the Track of the Raiders.

rear by himself, while Mormon Ben dashed on to reach the head of the column as soon as he could.

Ever since the scouts' capture no halt had been made for rest or meals, but scanty rations of biscuits and water had been served round to be consumed as they went along.

The column went on slowly until night again came on in that sickening desert, though Lasalle pressed his horses all he could to get beyond its deadly borders quickly. The way was difficult by day, and much worse by night.

When the night shadows became so dense that Buffalo Bill knew his motions could not be seen, he spoke in a low tone to Texas Jack, using the Pawnee tongue as a medium.

"Jack," said he, "I shall cut your bonds in a minute or two. Keep cool and quiet, and when I hand you the knife do the same favour for the young Frenchman on your right."

"I will—but how on earth came you free?"

"I found a friend in the hour of need," said Buffalo Bill. "But hush! When you are free, young Carle, do not turn or move till I give the word."

All this, spoken in Pawnee in an undertone, passed unnoticed by La Mort, but when, soon after, the horses of the two scouts and that of Edouard de Carle evidently lagged in their speed, allowing those preceding them to get ahead, La Mort ordered them in a bitter tone to push on.

"How can we urge our tired horses on when we can use neither hand nor foot?" said Buffalo Bill, just loud enough for La Mort to hear him.

"I'll help you, or kill your lazy beasts," said La Mort, pressing forward and striking the haunch of Powder Face with the flat of his hand.

Now, Buffalo Bill had taught that animal several tricks, one of them being to kick straight out when its rider's toes were pressed in near its fore-legs.

Buffalo Bill touched the spot just as La Mort slapped the vicious little horse, and the consequence was an immediate elevation of the animal's heels with such terrible precision that both took the villain squarely and heavily in the breast, knocking him literally stiff from his saddle.

"Keep your saddles and hold fast where you are till I speak, then be ready to turn and follow me," said Buffalo Bill, bending down and snatching up the rifle which La Mort had dropped as he fell from his horse.

Listening till without taking the alarm the column went on out of hearing, Buffalo Bill turned his horse, and, leaving La Mort where he had fallen, the three—Texas Jack, Carle, and himself—rode back on their trail, leaving the horses to find it in the darkness.

After riding some time Buffalo Bill felt that it was safe to speak aloud.

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

"Mr. Lasalle is in bad luck with his prisoners," he said in a tone of glee. "We are the second batch that he has lost."

"What do you mean?" asked Texas Jack.

"That last night two women got away as luckily as we have to-night."

"Heaven! Ah! I know now why I could not see them," cried the young artist. "Yes, it must be Adeline Cherchille and poor Lucille who have escaped. But oh, where are they? Wandering about, perhaps, in these frightful solitudes, they will perish by starvation or be devoured by wild beasts."

"Not much danger of either," said Buffalo Bill. "Ah! an alarm in our rear. Our escape has been discovered in some way. Ride now as if the fiend chased you. Follow me. I shall take the North Star for my guide. If they take the back track, we'll get off their line long before they get here."

Shots were heard to the west, fired not rapidly as in action, but at intervals as if for signals.

"I reckon La Mort wasn't kicked stone dead by Powder Face, as I thought he was when he fell, and he has fired to call help from the column," said Buffalo Bill.

"Yes, he is firing, and the answer comes from a long way further on. We'll be out of their reach before they can get back or have light to strike our trail," said Texas Jack.

"Keep a-going, Bill; you know the country better than I."

CHAPTER V.

BIG ELK'S BIG WORK.

HALT! We are overtaken. Halt and stand to your arms!" shouted Lasalle, when suddenly from far in his rear he heard a shot fired.

Then, while the straggling column closed up, hearing five more shots fired, as if at intervals, he said:

"It must be a signal. Pass the word back to the lieutenant to find out what it means."

The word went along the line accordingly, and presently the news came back that the lieutenant and the three prisoners were missing. Quickly Lasalle fired four shots from his heavy revolver, and far away to the rear he heard an answering shot.

Placing a small guard in charge of the captive women, he instantly faced the rest about, and, heading them, went back on the trail. A mile or two on he found La Mort on the ground, groaning and unable to rise, with his shoulder dislocated and his collar-bone broken.

Lasalle only waited to hear his lieutenant tell how he had been kicked from his horse, and that he did not know what

Big Elk's Big Work.

had become of the prisoners; and then, leaving one man to help him, the captain pushed on the back trail with the rest of the force at his best speed, determined to recapture the escaped men if possible.

In the darkness the tired horses made poor headway, but finally they emerged from the desolate country and came out into the timbered region of the hills. Here Lasalle knew that the escaped men were likely to take cover, unless they meant to keep back till the troops were met, and here, in spite of haste and anger, he decided to wait for the dawn of day, when he could see tracks. Closing up his ranks, he dismounted all the men and bade them take what rest they could while the horses browsed around to the length of their tethers.

Day seemed a long time coming, but at last the east showed a grey tinge, and then it turned to purple, and Lasalle could examine the ground.

"They have not repassed on the trail," he muttered as he looked long and carefully over the ground marked by his column. "Every track points forward."

"The lieutenant must have been awfully careless to let himself be surprised," said Mormon Ben. "The prisoners, securely bound, were riding three abreast when I left them, and I cautioned him to look closely to them."

"He is a self-confident fool," grumbled Lasalle. "I should have known better than to leave him where I did. But he has paid dearly for his carelessness. He will be helpless for weeks to come."

"Well, I can't say as I'm sorry, cap'n. The men all like you, but they say that La Mort knows nothing only to put on airs."

Further conversation was interrupted by a loud shout from a sentinel whom Lasalle had posted a hundred yards or more to the east.

"Troops! Troops and Indians!" shouted the man.

"Mount, men—mount!" cried the captain as soon as he heard the words.

Surprised at the sentinel's cry, Lasalle, quick to think and to act, knowing if he fell directly back and fled on his trail that he would expose his women prisoners to recapture, knowing also that with his detachment he would stand no chance of victory against regular troops aided by Pawnee braves, gave the word to his men as they mounted to scatter right and left, and to rally when and where they saw a smoke rise, for he would make it as a signal. Then, shouting to Mormon Ben to keep with him, he darted off at a gallop, just as the troops and Indians came charging on, yelling wildly and firing as they came.

Charging volleys are almost always random shots, and so

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

they proved in this case, for the robbers on their rested horses dashed away in every direction, not a single one falling under the fire.

The major, leading the charge, was almost wild when those whom he hoped to destroy or capture seemed to have vanished from sight. His horses and men were very exhausted, and a slow march back to the fort was his only alternative now, depending for life on the game they could kill, and, worst of all, unsuccessful in the main object of the expedition. He decided to return, but Big Elk, who was devotedly attached to Texas Jack, would not turn back till he had seen or heard something of the "Whirling Rope." Therefore, he, with about thirty of his braves, kept on, following the main trail through the desert, while the major faced his men to the east and sadly took the back track.

Big Elk and his braves pushed forward swiftly, for they were not at all used up, and soon after the sun had passed the meridian, just where the timber once more began to grow, they came in sight of the women and the guard left over them by Lasalle.

Luckily the robbers did not see the wily Pawnees when the latter discovered them, and quickly Big Elk prepared to take advantage of his discovery.

Swiftly and cunningly creeping on, keeping well under cover, the redskins reached a point where they could see how few men there were in charge of the women captives, and then, without waiting a second, the brave chief gave his terrible war-cry and sprang upon the robbers. Completely surprised, the wretches, instead of fighting like men, turned to flee, thereby rendering their destruction a swift certainty.

The women, expecting to be murdered, too, were fainting with new terrors while the Pawnees tore the scalps from the heads of their late captors and guards; but when Big Elk spoke to them in their own tongue, saying he was their friend, and asked after Texas Jack and Buffalo Bill, their relief and joy can be better imagined than described.

As soon as the least excited of the rescued women could speak, they told all they knew—about three men having been captured, then escaping in the night, and that the captain of the robber band, taking most of his men, had gone back in pursuit of them. They also told of two of their fellow women captives having escaped.

Big Elk now knew how the troops happened to come up with and disperse a part of the gang, and, knowing how very smart Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack were, he believed that they would not be retaken. So, gathering together all the horses and plunder, with the liberated women, he hurried to return to the major, that the latter might protect

Big Elk's Big Work.

the women while the Pawnees hunted for the scouts and trailed out to destruction the rest of the robbers.

Before nightfall he had overtaken the major and astonished him with his success, giving him a small supply of horses, as well as the captive women, thus relieving his mind on at least one point.

But the Pawnee chief was now the more determined to hunt for Texas Jack and Buffalo Bill. So taking his braves with him he went back once more on the trail.

* * * * *

Meanwhile, after making their escape from Lasalle, Texas Jack, Buffalo Bill, and De Carle rode on in silence for some time, when suddenly a terrible storm arose, which forced them to take shelter under a cliff.

"We may as well rest easy till we have the light of another day to travel by," said Buffalo Bill.

"Then, to while away the time, tell me what you know about my rich relations in France," said Texas Jack to the young artist.

Edouard de Carle was well versed in the history of the noble lineage of Omohundro, for the old marquis had never tired of recalling to memory the deeds of his ancestors, so he related past and recent happenings as known to him.

When the young artist had told all he could remember, and described the vast estates which, with the title, were the heritage of the brave scout, the last of the name, he asked Texas Jack if he was not anxious to hasten to France and take the position which kind fortune held for him.

"No," said the scout quietly. "As far as the title goes, that is a humbug! I would rather be a free American, with no master, than hold the casket of nobility under one who claimed to be my superior. As to property—I don't 'hanker' after it, as the Yankees say. I've always made a handsome living, and one doesn't want much more in this world. The next will have to take us just as we came into this, I reckon. At any rate, that is the sign we go out by."

"How different from Basil La Mort! He would murder you and a dozen more just to stand in your place and take your title."

"He is a poor rascal, anyway, and he must be wiped out to save the name of Omohundro from disgrace," said Texas Jack, laughing.

But sometimes it seems as if fiends in human shape escape from just punishment when better men fall. All the robbers were bad enough, but none were so completely bad as Basil La Mort. Yet when the guard over the women was set upon by the Pawnees and literally cut down to a man, Basil La Mort, who had lain down in the shade of a clump of trees to await the return of Lasalle, crept off unseen into

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

a thicket, whence he witnessed the slaying and scalping of the men and the rescue of the women with such feelings as we could not describe.

His own fear of falling into the hands of the Pawnees silenced his groans, though he suffered terribly from his broken bones, and his mental tortures were almost as great.

So far, all his triumphs had come to naught, for as soon as one success occurred a reverse followed.

La Mort believed, of course, that Lasalle, like the guard, had been met, overwhelmed, and defeated by the Pawnee Indians; and now, helpless, dismounted, with no weapons but his revolvers, and but little ammunition for them, unable to travel, scarcely able to crawl along, how could he hope to preserve life?

The day passed and darkness came again, and when the day once more dawned he was literally nearer dead than alive. Chilled through, he thought he would perish, but seeing a little smoke rise from the underpart of an old log which had backed a camp-fire, he crept to it and, with great difficulty, managed to tear off some dry bark and half-rotten splinters to feed the fire and finally to raise enough flame to bring warmth into his chilled and aching frame. As the fire burnt brighter he felt better; but yet, alone and without food, what could he hope for?

A dread of real savages and a fear that wild beasts would destroy him now filled La Mort's mind. Hearing the distant sound of a horse galloping, he crept back to his hiding-place as quickly as he could. From it he watched the arrival of a horseman, and it seemed like a weight lifted from his heart when he recognised one of the Red Brotherhood. Creeping out from his hiding-place, he hailed the newcomer, asking where the captain was.

"I expected to find him here. A smoke was to be the signal to draw us together again, for we all scattered yesterday when the troops and the Pawnees charged in upon us," said the man. "If he doesn't come here, I shall not stay."

"Do not leave me—wounded, helpless, and alone!" cried La Mort.

"I don't want to, lieutenant, but when we're broke up and scattered it is every man for himself, and the devil for us all!"

The speaker laughed at his own wit, but the lieutenant did not echo his laugh. He couldn't see where the laughing-point came in.

The fire, now fairly eating into the old log, and some fresh fuel that the newcomer tossed upon it, sent up a strong, clear column of blue smoke.

The signal, seen far and near, soon drew another and another of the band in, until there were ten men there, but

'Twixt Fire and Foe.

the one most wanted of all for his advice as well as his knowledge of the country—Lasalle—did not come.

The men looked in every direction to see his signal, for they now found, to their intense disgust, that this smoke had been raised by the unpopular and unlucky lieutenant, and they feared it would tend to keep away rather than to draw in such a wary and careful old stager as the captain.

At last, far away to the west, they saw a blue pillar of smoke rising, and then, in spite of the prayers and commands of the lieutenant, they rode away at full speed, leaving him again alone with his agonies and his terrors.

CHAPTER VI.

'TWIXT FIRE AND FOE.

WHEN day came again, and with it a cessation of the storm, Texas Jack, Buffalo Bill, and Edouard de Carle turned up the hill and rode into a dense grove which covered the lower portion of it.

"Bill, there has been someone through here!" said Texas Jack as he led the way, and he pointed to some broken branches.

"I should think there had, and women, too!" said Cody, as he caught up a piece of muslin from a thorny branch.

"Lucille!—poor Lucille!—wore a dress of just such material!" exclaimed Edouard de Carle. "Surely we are on their track?"

"We are on an Indian trail, too—here is where three lodges have been pitched!" exclaimed Buffalo Bill, who was slightly in advance, as he came out into an opening by a bright spring.

"And by this sign we know that poor Adeline and Lucille are prisoners!" exclaimed the young Frenchman as he pointed to a sandy spot beneath a thick-branched pine, for there, unwashed by the rain, they all saw the imprint of small feet, which had worn shoes, instead of moccasins.

"Edouard is right. And now we have a trail to follow and work to do. This has been a Sioux camp. There is an arrow that I know no other tribe would use," said Texas Jack, picking up a peculiar arrow, with black crow-feathers in the shaft.

"We've poor tools for a fight—one knife, and a rifle with but seventeen charges for it!" said Buffalo Bill, with a grim smile.

"We'll find tools, if we find the Indians!" muttered Texas Jack. "It is but a small gang. Only three lodges up here—there can't be over ten or a dozen bucks. Let's keep on and trust to luck and stratagem!"

The scouts now carefully took the bearings and, first look-

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

ing over the hill long and carefully from a shelter, satisfied themselves that the Indian party had gone beyond the reach of eyesight, at least, for neither smoke nor any other sign was visible now.

As Buffalo Bill expected, when they got out where the wash of the storm had not been interrupted by trees, all tracks had been obliterated, but, taking the course, the scouts kept on, and here and there found some marks, in a broken stick or an upturned stone, to tell them they were on the right track.

Thus they moved on, necessarily at a very slow rate, until the hot sun was overhead on its meridian line. Then they had reached a valley through which a broad stream, red and swollen with the recent rains, swept swiftly. At this the last sign of the party they had been following was quite lost. On the banks of the stream they found tracks of horses, but though they rode up and down both sides for a considerable distance they could not see where the party had left the water.

"Indians are cunning cusses," said Texas Jack. "This gang is evidently led by a regular fox, and he is good at throwing off his trail. But we'll scatter and hit it yet. You," said he to the artist, "may as well stay right here where you are. I will ride upstream and Buffalo Bill will ride down until we find where the reds branched off. For we'll find signs, sure, either up or down. They've got to leave the water somewhere. The one who finds the sign first will ride back here to you and wait for the other."

"Who'll take charge of the rifle?" asked Buffalo Bill, who had carried it ever since he had torn it from the grasp of La Mort.

"Keep it yourself and give me the knife," said Texas Jack. "But, remember, if either of us find the trail we're to come back and let the other know before we make any attempt to follow it up."

"All right, mate. Edouard, let your horse have the length of his tether at grass while we're gone, and don't fret. I reckon one or other of us will strike the trail before we've been gone an hour."

So the two scouts rode off—the one up and the other down the stream. The artist, having dismounted, let his horse feed, while he, looking up and down the stream, prayed that success might light on one or other of the brave men, and the trail be found.

In a short while the neighing of a horse attracted the notice of his own steed, and the animal neighed shrilly in return.

"The trail must have been found," murmured the artist, "for one of them is coming back quickly."

'Twixt Fire and Foe.

He saw a rider coming—not near the stream, but from back on the hillside. One glance told him that it was an enemy.

Unarmed as he was, it is easy to imagine that Edouard de Carle felt more than uneasy when he saw an Indian warrior, fully armed with rifle, pistols, and knife, riding down swiftly towards him on a fleet and powerful horse, and when as the plumed and painted rider came near he heard a hoarse, sarcastic laugh, while a voice, but too quickly recognised, addressed him, he felt that he was doomed.

The voice was that of Jacques Lasalle, and he cried out:

"So ho! my young artist, we have met again! Met, as lovers say, to part no more!"

"Fiend! I am unarmed and helpless, therefore your taunts must be endured."

"Thanks for the information. But where are your two bold and adroit friends—the would-be Marquis of Omohundro and the renowned Buffalo Bill?"

"That is for you to learn; but not from me."

"Oh, ho! you are insolent. I hardly know whether to put your life out now, as I would a candle, or to let you burn a little longer for my amusement. Ah! here are other tracks than yours, and they have taken to the water. Quite a party, too."

The captain of the Red Brotherhood was puzzled. There had been but three who had escaped from him, but here was the sign of many horsemen.

Lasalle kept eyeing the tracks, and all at once he saw a mark which was so peculiar that he dismounted to examine it.

"So!" he said, after a long and close inspection. "White women, with high-heeled shoes, have been here. Now I begin to see into matters. I can read signs about as well as I could your words, were the truth to come from your lips. The two women—Mesdemoiselles Adeline and Lucille—escaped from my band only to fall into the hands of Indians. You and your friends have come upon the trail, and followed it up till the real reds took to the water to hide their course. Your two friends have each separated here, one going up and the other down stream, to find the trail where it leaves the water. You are left here to await their return and report."

De Carle was astonished, too much so to utter a word of denial. The pale face and downcast eyes of his listener assured Lasalle that he had hit the truth.

"Well, we will leave a watcher here, rather like you, but yet not you," said Lasalle coolly. "Take off your outer garments—take them off quickly, or I'll leave your corpse here with the clothes on instead of your clothes only."

The artist could not comprehend what Lasalle meant to

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

do; but when he saw him place his hand on a revolver he knew that he must obey or die.

"Be quick! There is a blanket to take the place of the clothes you take off," said Lasalle, tossing down a woollen robe.

The young Frenchman obeyed. He took off his hat, his coat, and his riding-breeches, and stood in his under-clothes.

"Now, sir, you see that bush? Place your hat and clothes on it, as you would on a model when you are in your studio. Be in a hurry, and do it artistically, or I will help you. Then put the blanket over your shoulders."

In a few minutes a very respectable figure loomed up from the bush, made from the artist's clothes stretched on the branches and surmounted by his hat.

"That will do. Believing you to be here waiting, the scouts will not detect the cheat till close at hand. By that time I shall be ready for them. Now put the blanket over your shoulders and follow me."

Mechanically De Carle obeyed.

Arriving at a small knoll which commanded a view of the grassy plains below and of the river up and down, while those upon it were nearly hidden in the leafy screen, Lasalle dismounted and fastened his horse. Then, gathering a bundle of dry sticks, he set them on fire, and when they were all ablaze he threw an armful of moss, torn from the roots of trees near by, upon it. The blaze in an instant died down, while a dense column of white smoke rose from the smouldering fire in the moss.

With a look of satisfaction the outlaw watched the pillar of smoke as it went higher and higher in the sky, and then he fed the flame from time to time with dry sticks and threw on more moss, so as to keep the signal up.

Edouard de Carle, not knowing that Lasalle was making a prearranged signal for his friends, felt rather pleased than otherwise at this bold revelation of the whereabouts of himself and his captor, for he thought it would aid Texas Jack and Buffalo Bill to find him, and his escape would thereby be facilitated. So he stood quietly by and saw his foe feed the fire, keeping an intent watch up and down the river on his own account, hoping each moment to see one or both of the scouts come in sight.

Jacques Lasalle seemed not to think of them, for his attention, when not on the fire and smoke, seemed to bend the other way. If he expected anyone, he looked for them to come from the forest or over the hills, for he kept his eyes turned in that direction more than any other, seeming also to listen for sounds from that course.

"Ah! there is one of your friends. He rides fast, as if he had news!"

The exclamation left the lips of Lasalle as both he and

'Twixt Fire and Foe.

Edouard saw Texas Jack come down the opposite bank of the stream in the valley at a swift gallop.

"When he finds a dummy in the bush in place of a live Frenchman he'll follow our trail, and then—why, the prospects that he will ever see Castle Omohundro will grow exceedingly slim. With a rest over this rock I can command eight hundred yards of clear ground on our trail, and if he can dodge seventeen bullets from as good a Henry rifle as ever touched a shoulder he ought to live."

The villain while he spoke carefully examined his rifle to see that it was ready for use; then taking a lasso from his saddle-bow he threw its noose over the arms and body of the artist, and with a few rapid turns secured him firmly to a tree near his fire. Then he took a strap, and with a stout stick made and fastened a gag in the mouth of his hapless prisoner.

"There, young man—there! You can look all you want to, but motion and voice are not in your line just now. I have no need to caution you to remain quiet, for the game of silence is a sure pop on your part. Now I'll slip down to a better position, where I can make a sure thing of it when the would-be marquis tries our trail."

Lasalle crept off down the hill as he spoke, and Edouard de Carle, in an agony of mind, as well as body, bound so tightly that it seemed as if his veins would burst, saw him creep nearer and nearer to the scout, who had just reached the bank opposite to the bush on which the clothes were stretched.

Texas Jack halted there, evidently thinking that there was something wrong, and Edouard, thinking not of his own peril, hoped that the brave Omohundro would not cross the stream.

The latter halted a moment only, then, turning his horse into the water, he crossed swiftly to the place where the dummy was erected.

At this moment the artist, startled by a crackling sound, saw to his terror something which drew his attention and thoughts away from Texas Jack, Lasalle, and everything but a new and a fearful peril. The fire left by Lasalle had caught among some dry leaves and sticks near by, and was spreading with a rapidity fearful and strange to one not used to burning woods and prairies.

The young Frenchman glanced down the hill and his mental agony increased, for he saw that Lasalle, evidently unaware of the spreading fire, was intently watching Texas Jack, who had come up and was examining their trail. Then the smoke rose, and the flames rushed through a glade of high, dry grass between him and them, and he could see them no more.

With a prayer on his lips Edouard closed his eyes, bracing

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

every nerve for the horrible death that seemed so surely to await him.

At the very instant when hope seemed more than madness—for the flames were at his feet and were creeping up the tree to which he was bound, when he breathed only choking smoke and blasting fire—he felt the ropes yielding. One wild, frantic effort and he was loose, but it seemed as if he was no better off, for fire—fire on every hand—encircled him.

Wildly he rushed through it, on what course he did not know, the crackling flames eating into his face and limbs and setting the blanket on fire, which he still kept wrapped about him.

Suddenly, when his breath began to fail and his limbs to give way, he heard the sound of falling water, even amid the crash and crackle of the terrible fire. On, on, guided by the sound, he tottered, until, when Nature, utterly exhausted, seemed to fail, he staggered and fell into and under a small cascade.

"Heaven is merciful!" he moaned as he felt the cool dash of falling waters upon his blistered, shrivelled skin.

Here at any rate he was safe from the flames. A moment later he had sunk into unconsciousness.

But meanwhile, what of Texas Jack?

"By all that's lovely, this beats me!" muttered the scout as he rode up to the bush where the garments of Edouard de Carle had been placed. "This looks odd. Here are the clothes of the artist, made up so as to look like him, while there are no signs of any struggle about as if there had been a fight. These, too, are his own tracks where the sand is clean, close to the bush. He must have put the clothes there himself. Can he have gone crazy? It must be. I'll have to hunt his trail—but I'd like to see Buffalo Bill and tell him that I've found where the trail left the water and about the smoke of the camp-fire. Ah! there's another smoke up yonder."

The scout stopped suddenly, for he saw new tracks where a horse had stood, its rider dismounted, and the place where the butt of a rifle had rested on the ground.

"There's been a stranger here," he muttered. "An enemy, no doubt—well armed. The artist had no arms. Now I see it all. This enemy has made him strip, put his clothes up as a blind, and then forced him off. Ah! the woods are on fire. Whew! how the blaze runs! I'll have to cross the drink to get away from it. Ah! there's a man up in the edge of the woods. He is on the skulk, but the fire will warm him out. He sees me—that's a sure pop. It is an Indian, or else one of Lasalle's band. Ah! here comes Buffalo Bill. Now for a council of war."

Buffalo Bill was seen coming up the stream from below, and Jack waited impatiently for his arrival.

In the Pow of Sioux.

"It seems to me that you've made a thundering big fire for a recall signal," said Buffalo Bill as he rode up. "Or is it the doings of our artist pard?"

"Look there. That is all I can find of him," said Texas Jack, and he pointed to the clothes on the bush.

"Jumping Jones! What does that mean? Has he shed his skin and gone up?"

"No; he has been made to strip by someone, leave his clothes there, and been carried off. There's an Indian or one of Lasalle's band up there in the edge of the wood; but he'll have to leave there soon. Bill, I've found the trail I was after; but if the prairie fire spreads, as it looks likely to do, those that made it will be burned out if they don't reach water. Look, Bill, the fire is in the grass! We've got to leave!"

"Yes," said Buffalo Bill, and dashing up to the bush he took the clothes of Edouard de Carle, rolled them in a bundle, and lashed them in front of his saddle.

A moment later, while the wave of flame rolled down towards them through the long, dry grass, they entered the wide but shallow stream and crossed. Then, halting, they looked over on the hills, but looked in vain, for a sight of the artist or Indian.

"Bill," said Texas Jack, "we've got nothing to do here. Let's ride upstream to where I found the trail. We may find something to do there."

"All right, Jack, I'm with you," replied Cody, and accordingly the two pards turned the heads of their horses and went upstream at a gallop.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE POWER OF SIOUX.

LET us now go back and see how it was that Adeline Cherchille and Lucille Breton managed to escape from Lasalle's band.

When night fell upon the column wherein were the two poor women, Adeline whispered to her friend to watch with her a chance when they should pass among rocks, and at the moment she dropped from her horse silently on one side Lucille was to drop on the other and crouch down behind the rocks until the column passed on. Then, if undiscovered, they would hasten out of the line of march and trust to Providence to avoid recapture and find help.

At last a place was reached where two abreast had just room to ride along, great boulders of rock being thick on each side. The guard even had to fall back here.

"Now!" whispered Adeline to her companion—"this is our time!" and quick as a falling shadow she slipped from her horse and crouched down behind the nearest rock.

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

Lucille followed her example on the other side.

The actions of neither were noticed, for their horses, relieved of their weight, moved on in the line as steadily as before.

The moment the column had got out of sight and hearing Adeline crossed to where Lucille was hidden, and, grasping her hand, said:

"Come, little woman—come quickly! We must be far away from here before daylight."

Lucille needed no urging to go, and to go fast.

Running rather than walking, falling sometimes in the darkness, but quickly springing up and going on again, the two women hurried away, really not knowing what course they took. At last, just at the glimmer of day, stopping to take breath, Adeline scented smoke. Without a thought of new dangers she cried out:

"We must be near a camp. Perhaps those who pursued the robbers are near at hand."

"A fire!—I see a fire!" exclaimed Lucille, rushing towards it.

Adeline followed, and the next instant both found themselves in the presence of real, unmistakable Indians.

With a scream of terror Lucille turned to flee, but a tall warrior laid his hand upon her shoulder, and she sank, terror-stricken, at his feet.

Adeline, more self-possessed, finding three or four more Indians before her, addressed one who seemed most ornamented and best armed—evidently the head man or chief.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" she asked in French.

The savage did not understand her, but there was something in her language which struck him, and he called a half-breed squaw from the lodge of buffalo-skins that stood near. She spoke Canadian French, and now through her Adeline managed with difficulty to get into something like an understanding with the chief—for such he was.

She found that this was a small hunting party of Sioux, commanded by this man, a sub-chief in the Ogallalla tribe, and that they were at war not only with the palefaces, but all the redskin tribes which bordered their country.

When Adeline explained, as well as she could, that she had just escaped from bad white men with her friend, and wanted to be taken back to the great iron road from which they had been carried away, Wide Mouth, for so the chief was named, shook his head. He could not go to the railway without having a fight. The soldiers of the Great Father by the sea were plenty there, and would try to kill him and his people.

Then Adeline tried to have him guard her to the trail, telling him there were people coming to help her and over-

In the Power of Sioux.

take the bad men who had killed her friends and stolen her. But the chief, alarmed at this news, instantly broke up his camp and hurried her and Lucille off with his own people towards some timbered trees many miles to the north-west, where he could easily find concealment from the troops if they were indeed near. Here Wide Mouth and his braves and squaws pitched their camp.

Adeline and Lucille were terribly anxious as to the outcome of this new turn of affairs. Their only consolation was that now they were not treated rudely, but were given a place by themselves, curtained off with robes in the chief's lodge, and had all the food they wanted, without being forced to labour like the squaws.

This was their treatment until the following day, when, without explaining why he broke camp, Wide Mouth did so suddenly, and a forced march of all that day and the succeeding night in a cold pelting storm gave the poor women more discomfort than ever. It almost seemed as if death would be a relief.

In vain did Adeline question the half-breed squaw as to the cause of this swift and sudden journey. She either would not or could not tell.

The route took them into a region of steep broken hills, where deep chasms were frequent, along which they were forced to ride looking down into dangers which made them tremble for life, even though they almost wished for death.

The chief kept on until his ponies were completely tired out, and then, entering a broad stream which flowed through a valley, he kept his course along in the water for a short distance, when he forded it, and entering a dense grove of evergreen trees again camped.

Adeline was satisfied, from his actions and frequent glances to the rear, that there was some force following the chief—whether it was that of Lasalle and La Mort, or those who would be friends, she could only conjecture. But now, when he was well hidden in the dense growth of evergreens, Wide Mouth allowed his exhausted ponies to rest, and while his squaws put up the lodges for himself and his little band he lighted and smoked his pipe for the first time in all the hurried march. He seemed to think that his enemies, whoever they were, had been thrown completely from his trail by his endurance and cunning.

Seeing him in such good humour, Adeline thought she might learn something through the half-breed squaw, and perhaps might, by promises of presents, get him to take her and Lucille at least to some trading post or settlement. So, pleasing the squaw by the present of a silken scarf, which till now had been worn about her own neck, she got her to ask the chief what had made him travel so fast.

“Wide Mouth saw, just at sundown, two terrible enemies

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

to the Sioux nation, two paleface warriors who are such great medicines that no bullet will kill them, no arrow finds its way to their hearts. 'Long Rifle' and 'Whirlin' Rope' were close to our camp, and we had to move fast or they would have found us. The Great Spirit was the friend of Wide Mouth, for He sent rain in the night to hide our tracks. So now Wide Mouth is not afraid of his enemies. He will rest here till he thinks they have gone home to their camp by the big fort on the Platte. Then he will start for his village on the head of the Laramie, and the white women shall become the squaws of Sioux chiefs."

"Would not the great chief like to be rich, so as to buy many horses and plenty of guns and warm blankets?" asked Adeline, through her half-breed interpreter.

"How can that be?" asked the Indian.

"I have rich friends who will give a great deal to see me," said Adeline.

She only thought that if once where they could be used, she had some diamonds concealed on her person that would buy friends and make riches to enable her to fulfil any promise.

"The friends of the white squaw are the enemies of the Sioux," said Wide Mouth thoughtfully. "If he was to listen to her song now, she would hear his death-song by-and-by."

"No. I would speak good words for the great chief. My friends should be his friends! I will swear it under the all-seeing eye of the Great Spirit!"

The chief smiled. He doubted the ability of the captive to make her words good. Like all Indians, he thought there was neither strength, worth, nor influence in a woman. Fit only for slaves, not companions, the Indian regards women; therefore poor Adeline had but a slim chance to get her freedom through him. She did not understand, or for a moment think, that the men whom he called "Long Rifle" and "Whirling Rope" could be her friends, nor did she even dream that Edouard de Carle lived to try to aid her.

Lucille was little comfort and no aid to her now. She was of a different mould from her heroic mistress, who would not despair, no matter how dark all seemed about her.

"Let the worst come—we will escape or die!" said Adeline when all attempts to induce the old chief to carry her to the settlement seemed to fail.

"Then the white squaw will die!" said the old chief, and now for the first time the poor girl learned that he understood English, for he had spoken in that tongue.

Adeline was glad that she had learned this when she did, lest, in talking to Lucille as she did sometimes in English, she should have revealed some plan and been detected ere she had tried to carry it out. Now she would be on her guard.

At length, Wide Mouth, seeming to feel satisfied that his

In the Power of Sioux.

enemies had lost his trail, and having a poor hunting-ground where he was now encamped, made up his mind to start for his village. The sooner he turned his white captives over to his chiefs the better it would be, for now he was in constant fear of their recapture or escape, for with Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack in search of them, as he had no doubt they were, it would be hard to hide long from their keen eyes.

So it happened that at the very time when Texas Jack and Buffalo Bill were riding so fast up the stream, as seen at the end of the preceding chapter, the Indian chief was emerging from the forest with his train. Wide Mouth's movements were hastened by the approaching prairie fire, for the smoke-cloud and the noise of the fire-fiend roaring along on its march of destruction had already reached his ears.

They had just crossed the river and were rising a bluff on the safe side, when the two scouts broke in sight not a quarter of a mile below. There was an instant halt on both sides to prepare for defence and to reconnoitre.

Wide Mouth halted on the crest of a ridge, while Texas Jack and Buffalo Bill stopped on another.

The scouts saw the white women before the redskin chief could conceal them. They were easily known by their dresses, and Wide Mouth knew that there would be no use to deny having them if this affair resulted in a talk instead of a fight.

Had Texas Jack and Buffalo Bill been fully armed with rifles and revolvers, they would no more have hesitated to charge down on that Indian band than they would have dashed into a herd of buffalo. In truth, Wide Mouth, who knew the men so well, wondered why they halted.

Hoisting a white handkerchief on the barrel of his rifle, Buffalo Bill signified a desire to talk.

"Wide Mouth would rather talk than fight with them," muttered the chief.

Turning to one of his most trusty men, he bade him watch the captives closely while he rode down on the plain between the hills to meet the scout. Then, hoisting a white piece of buckskin on his lance as an answering signal of peace, the old chief rode slowly to a line where Texas Jack, halfway between the hills, waited for him.

"Do you know me, Ogallalla?" asked Texas Jack as the chief halted a spear's length or more from him.

"Yes; you are Whirling Rope, the friend of the Pawnee and the enemy of my nation."

"Your enemy only when you deserve my hate and merit my vengeance. I would be your friend now."

"Why?"

"Because I would like to serve two poor white women who have escaped from bad white men, only to fall into your

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

hands. They can be no good to you, but I can give you presents that will do you good—fast horses, warm blankets, and bright cloths.”

“The women are to be wives to my sons in the great village beyond the Laramie,” said the chief.

“Then the Wide Mouth has got to fight to keep them. Long Rifle is close at hand, and not far away Big Elk with his Pawnees waits for my signal.”

The Ogallalla did not believe Big Elk was near.

“If the peace-flag must go down and the hatchet come up, Wide Mouth is ready,” he said. “But let Whirling Rope take warning! Two warriors stand by the side of the two women. Each holds his sharp knife in his hand, and when a single shot is heard from you or from me, each woman will get her death-blow and their scalps shall hang from my spear’s point!”

Texas Jack knew well from experience that it was the usual treatment white captives received at the hands of the Indians when rescue was attempted—he had seen too many dead women and children to have any doubt in the matter. Strategy must yet be used.

“Will Wide Mouth let me go alone and unarmed to speak to these women before him in the camp, or where they stand, and promise to let me come back free?”

“Yes,” was the redskin’s reply after a moment’s hesitation.

“Then I will go back and tell Long Rifle to stay where he is until I return.”

Texas Jack now rode back and talked long and earnestly with Buffalo Bill, who, knowing the treachery of the Sioux, tried to dissuade Texas Jack from going; but the latter was determined to see his cousin Adeline and give her hope, even if he could do nothing to rescue her now, so he made up his mind to that effect, and no plea or argument could change his decision.

“If I see them trying to lift your hair, Jack, I shall have to go in, even if I go under!” said Buffalo Bill.

“All right, pard. I think I can keep things smooth.”

Texas Jack then turned and rode back to Wide Mouth, and the latter noticed that the white man carried no weapon.

“The Whirling Rope has had a long talk with Long Rifle,” said the Ogallalla as Texas Jack joined him.

“Yes. We were counting up how many horses and blankets we could raise to offer for the two women if Wide Mouth grew wise and listened to us.”

“Wide Mouth has no ears for trade to-day. He promised to let the Whirling Rope speak to the women where he could hear the talk—he will do no more.”

“Good! We will ride on.”

The scout and the chief rode side by side to the hill where his armed band sat silent and grim upon their horses. And,

In the Power of Sioux.

even as the chief said, on each side of the white captives sat warriors ready to put them to death if a hostile shot was fired.

"Oh, merciful Heaven! That must be Jean Omchundro, my cousin!" exclaimed the younger of the two captives as Texas Jack rode up, his handsome face full of pity and concern.

"Yes, lady," he said, "I am John Omohundro; and if I have heard aright, I am your cousin, if your name is Adeline."

"It is. Oh! cannot I go with you from among these dreadful savages?"

"You must, or I will stay here and die with you!" exclaimed Jack, his face all aglow with excitement as he looked on his beautiful cousin. He had never seen such beauty before.

Turning to Wide Mouth, he spoke.

"Chief," he said, "let these two women go free with me, and I will give you a hundred horse, a hundred guns, and a hundred blankets. More than that, I will swear by the Great Spirit never to lift my hand again against one of your tribe on the plains!"

"Words are cheap! Where are your horses, your guns, and your blankets?" said the chief doubtingly.

"At the fort," said Texas Jack earnestly. "I can give all I promise."

The chief seemed touched. With a hundred guns, a hundred blankets, and a hundred more good horses, he would be a very rich man—the richest in his tribe. But suddenly his eyes flashed with angry fire.

"Look!" he cried—"look!"

He pointed to where Buffalo Bill had been left, and Texas Jack saw, to his intense agony, a body of men riding towards his pard. They could not be friends, for they were dressed as Indians, but rode and charged like white men.

"I must leave you and join Buffalo Bill!" he cried, addressing Adeline. "We are pards, and if one goes under the other must. He would die for me!"

Turning, the scout would have ridden off, all unarmed as he was, but Wide Mouth, who thought that the newcomers were Pawnees and friends of Texas Jack, believed his truce broken, and the instant Texas Jack turned he was stricken helpless from his horse and bound.

"Monster! Coward! How could you strike him down when he trusted to your honour?" cried Adeline, springing to the ground and raising the head of her cousin.

The Indian made no answer. He was busy just then watching the actions of Buffalo Bill.

That heroic man was anything but idle, for, seeing who and what came yelling and charging down upon him, he

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

raised his rifle and emptied three saddles before he moved from his position. Then, turning his horse towards the band of Sioux, still firing as he retreated, he gave the animal a free rein and a sharp heel.

The Red Brotherhood, for this was a part of Lasalle's band, had lost seven men from that unerring fire before they saw the party of Sioux on the hill. Then they halted, evidently thinking they were riding into a trap, and Buffalo Bill, keeping on, dashed up to the spot where Texas Jack, just coming back to consciousness, lay on the ground, with Adeline Cherchille weeping over him.

"Who dared to do this?" Buffalo Bill shouted as he sprang from his horse and cut the thongs which had been wound about the limbs of his friend. "Was it you, dog of an Ogallalla, with your peace-flag flying?"

And Buffalo Bill pointed to the flag yet erected in the valley.

Wide Mouth hung his head in shame, for even his warriors felt the justice of the rebuke.

Pointing to the band of men who had halted and seemed undecided what to do, the chief said:

"Wide Mouth thought they were Pawnees come to help the Whirling Rope and take the scalps of Wide Mouth and his people. He thought the Whirling Rope had deceived him."

"There is no deceit in the Whirling Rope," replied the scout. "See—those are bad white men, dressed to do their evil work in Indian dress, so as to bring blame on the red man. I have killed seven—help us to kill the rest—take all their scalps, and then the Whirling Rope and I will forgive your fault and hold a talk of friendship with you. Come! they have halted—they are cowards. Charge at the head of your braves, and I will lead the way with you!"

CHAPTER VIII.

RUTHLESS LASALLE.

THE bold speech and the daring will of the great scout had such an effect on Wide Mouth and his warriors that in a second, grasping their weapons, they sprang to horse.

The next instant, when Buffalo Bill, with only the words to Texas Jack, "Stay with the women!" turned his horse and dashed with a thundering shout towards the painted ruffians of the Red Brotherhood, every warrior, led by the chief himself, followed at headlong speed.

This charge, terrific enough to have startled better men than they, threw the Red Brotherhood into an instant panic, and, delivering a harmless, long-range fire, they turned their horses and fled, scattering as they went.

Ruthless Lasalle.

This alone sealed their doom. Lacking heart and confidence, single men once in flight are literally good for nothing in resistance. Fleeing at their utmost speed, they could not get beyond the terrible rifle-range of Buffalo Bill, and soon the nearest to him toppled from his saddle. Then another went down, and the yelling Sioux, following fast, stopped only to tear off the scalps, while Wide Mouth, with his blood fairly up now, soon sent a victim down with his own rifle.

It was not a fight—it was simply a chase and a massacre. But it lasted all too long, for, impelled by fear, the fugitives fled at their utmost speed, and many miles were covered before the last one went down.

Then Buffalo Bill halted to let his horse rest and to look over the ground he had crossed. To his wonder, the first who rode up to join him was Texas Jack. The brave scout, furnished with arms which he had taken from one of the slain men, had tried hard to reach the van in the pursuit, and had nearly done so when the last victim fell.

Scattered far and wide, the Sioux were seen here and there, but now they were fully three leagues from their starting-point and night was close at hand.

"Why did you leave the women, Jack?" asked Buffalo Bill as his pard rode up. "Surely they are not alone?"

"No; I left the Sioux squaws with them. Could I see you ride off in a fight and stay behind myself?"

"Well, the sooner we get back to them the better. I reckon we can buy them off from the Sioux now, for the latter will be apt to be more friendly."

When Wide Mouth had given the scalp-yell over the last of the Red Brotherhood, in that gang at least, he joined the scouts, and they turned towards their late starting-point.

Night was now upon them, but the glaring light from the burning woods on the hills beyond the river reflected far and wide, and they had no difficulty in retracing their trail.

Tired with a long run, their horses made rather slow progress, and the night was pretty well advanced when they neared the spot where the Indian women had been left with their camp equipage and the two captives, Adeline and Lucille.

The chief, who rode in advance, uttered an ejaculation of surprise as they approached the spot, for with the women had been left quite a number of spare horses, the lodges, and what provisions they had, and now neither horses nor women could be seen.

"They are gone—all gone!" said the chief, and then in his own tongue he shouted an order to his braves, who instantly rode off in various directions to search for the women or the trail.

Texas Jack, the quickest in thought of all, sprang to a clump of bushes close by, and gathering a few bunches of

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

dried grass made a quick blaze, which threw its glare for many yards around.

A cry of horror broke from his lips, for his eyes had fallen on a dozen or more bodies, all in a cluster, stricken down apparently when they were gathered together through fear or some other cause, and they were the bodies of redskin squaws.

The cry of the scout brought Wide Mouth and Buffalo Bill quickly to his side, and their eyes immediately fell on the horrible spectacle.

Quickly the chief and the scouts, with improvised torches in their hands, rushed to the spot to see who they were and how they had been slain.

"All my women—my own squaws and the squaws of my people," said Wide Mouth sadly. "The white women are not here. But they did not do this. White men did it, for no scalps were taken. The squaws have been shot down."

Turning fiercely to Texas Jack and Buffalo Bill, he cried:;

"Are there friends of yours on your trail who would do this?"

"No," answered Texas Jack, speaking for both. "No, chief of the Ogallalla, we would scorn to own a friend who would strike a woman down. This has been done by our bitterest foes—men of the same party that we followed, men of the same gang with those whose scalps hang at your belt, and they have stolen our friends away—my cousin and her friend, who were your captives. I and Long Rifle will follow their trail."

"It is well. We will look for their trail, too."

The chief uttered a loud, shrill cry, which rang over the plains like the screech of a wounded panther. It was a recall, and his warriors, hearing it, hurried back.

A few words told them what had been done, and by whom the cruel act was supposed to have been perpetrated.

In an instant the wild, melancholy death-wail rose, and then with fierce yells the angry savages began to search for the trail of the murderers. With torches made from sticks and knotted bunches of grass they looked over the ground, aided by the keen-sighted and experienced scouts.

Texas Jack and Buffalo Bill were the first to detect tangible signs. They found the tracks of two men, one with large feet and the other making a smaller track, but both wearing boots. They traced them to and fro around where the Indian women had been slain and back to where the white captives had been secured to a stout bush with their own scarves—for the knotted scarves had been cut apparently in haste, drawn too tight to untie by the struggles of the captives. Up to this spot the redskins' horses had been driven in a body by the two raiders, and from here the trail led right into the shallow river, where, of course, it was lost.

Ruthless Lasalle.

"They're old hands. I'll bet my scalp that Jacques Lasalle himself has had a hand in it," said Texas Jack.

"They are but two," said Buffalo Bill. "They have not been gone an hour. Let Wide Mouth and his warriors follow down the water and we will go up, or he up and we down, till we strike the trail. The one that finds it first shall make a big fire if to-night, or a smoke if it is not found before morning, so as to call others to the trail."

"Long Rifle is wise. His words are good. Let it be so," said Wide Mouth.

"No; hear me!" cried Texas Jack. "I will go with half of the warriors, and Long Rifle will go with the chief and the other half. We know white men's ways better than you do, and it will be better to have one of us with each party."

"Good! The Whirling Rope knows more than any of us," declared the Indian chief. "I will trust him with half my braves, and he shall be their chief on the trail. We will talk no more—we will go, and go fast."

"Yes, every minute is precious," cried Texas Jack.

Quickly the parties were divided, and then, taking each bank of the river, they hurried away.

* * * * *

Meanwhile let us see what new calamity had overtaken Adeline Cherchille and her friend Lucille Breton.

Left so suddenly by her new-found cousin, who would not remain behind when he saw Buffalo Bill charging with the real Indians upon the bogus red men, Adeline felt sick at heart.

"He rode off entirely unarmed!" she murmured. "They will kill him, for he cannot defend himself without arms!"

"They flee on every side!" cried Lucille. "The cowards do not stay to fight!"

Addie did not hear her. She was weeping.

The squaws looked upon her with contempt. Tears were a clear waste of water in their opinion. Turning from her, they viewed with silent pride the wild pursuit of the fugitive ruffians, and a grunt of approval left their blue lips every time they saw a victim fall. Thus they watched until the Indians and the scouts were out of sight, and then, with the inherent squaw-devilry of their ever ugly natures, they turned their attention to the poor captives and began to torment them.

So much noise did they make, laughing and screaming, that two horsemen riding towards them at a gallop were not observed until they were close upon them.

"Heavens! It is the monster Lasalle!" cried addie, white with terror.

"Yes—with one faithful follower left to do his bidding!" cried the ruffian. "Tie those two white women with their

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

scarfs to that bit of chapparal!" he added, addressing the man who rode with him—that person being none other than our old acquaintance, Mormon Ben.

The latter obeyed his orders instantly.

"What shall we do with the squaws, captain?" asked the ruffian when his work was done.

The latter, huddled in a heap, stood a few rods off, apparently terror-struck, for the newcomers, painted and feathered like red men, were of no nation that they knew.

"What did you do at Meadow Lake with the women?"

"Cut their throats, by jingo! That is what we did at Meadow Lake."

"That is rough. Well, we'll shoot these instead."

"There's not much harm in them, cap'n—they're too bad scared."

"All the better. Pitch in and do up the job before the fellows that are after our poor boys get through with the job and get back. It was a lucky thing you came up my side of the river and fell in with me, Ben."

"I reckon it was, cap'n!"

Then the two villains deliberately drew their revolvers and started to shoot down the defenceless redskins.

Unkindly as they had been treated by the squaws, the white women raised a pitiful cry and earnestly pleaded for their lives.

A hoarse laugh from Lasalle was the only answer they got, and in a minute more the cruel work was done.

"Now, Ben, we must gather in the horses, and be off. They are fresh, and with an hour's start we shall be beyond all danger. I know the country here better than any white man living, and by taking water for an hour no track of ours will be found before another day, if even then."

"All right, cap'n—all right," said Ben.

Then, mounting their horses, they drove in the Indian ponies that were feeding near.

When these were in line Lasalle selected the strongest-looking animals, saddled them, and cutting the scarfs which the struggling women had drawn tight when they sought to get away from the sight of that horrible massacre, he and Mormon Ben lifted them on the horses, fastened them there, and then rode away.

It was twilight when they entered the river, and up and down, as far as they could see, no living thing was in sight.

The women, horror-stricken, trembling for their fate, hardly dared to raise their eyes, for fear they would incur a death-blow. Yet Addie believed that if Jean Omohundro lived he would find and follow that trail, and would attempt her rescue.

Poor Lucille dared not hope for mercy from Lasalle, who had, as she believed, slain her husband. She did not even

A Ministering Angel.

look at him as he rode sullenly on at the head of the line, while Mormon Ben, fully armed and ever vigilant, followed in the rear.

For a long time, it seemed to the captives, they rode up the river—for time goes heavy when trouble hangs upon its wings; and then suddenly they left the broad stream, and in a narrow, gurgling, dashing brook travelled up among the hills of the north in single file.

Poor Addie sighed when she thought that all this was done to hide her tracks, and she felt hope die within her heart as she thought no trace would be left when they entered the brook.

By a sudden impulse, she scarcely knew why, she detached one of her slippers that she wore and let it drop into the shallow stream just as they entered it. Further up, where at a bend she knew it would be apt to lodge against the shore, she dropped the other; and she prayed that her noble-looking cousin would find them, for daintily embroidered on the front was her own name, done by her hand in an hour of happy leisure long before. She cared not if her tender feet were torn by thorns or jagged rocks, deprived of their covering; she only hoped that Texas Jack by this might find a trace, and thus be enabled to follow and rescue her from the demon in whose hands she dared not hope for mercy.

CHAPTER IX.

A MINISTERING ANGEL.

WHEN Edouard de Carle came to himself he was in complete darkness, lying upon a robe of fur—alone it seemed, for he could hear no sound, not even the rustle of a leaf nor a breathing thing. Not even a star could be seen—either he was in a cave or else he had been stricken blind. He tried to move, but his limbs seemed stiffened and incapable of motion.

“Oh, horror!” he moaned. “Am I saved from one fearful death to die another?”

A footfall, light and quick, like a woman’s springy tread, reached his ear. Then there came a flash of light, and he knew that he was not blind. For his eyes opened to such a wondrous scene that he thought he was either mad or else that he had been transported into some fairy grotto. He saw on every side glittering walls of crystal, hung with gorgeous figures all about him, shining with rainbow hues and brilliant as the diamond.

A second only did the young artist glance at these, for his eyes were attracted to a yet stranger sight. A girl dressed in furs bore in one hand the torch which illuminated the scene, while in the other she carried a string of beautiful speckled trout. Her eyes were dark, her face lovely in

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

feature and complexion, her long black hair floated over perfect shoulders, her form seemed fit for a model of Venus.

"Thank Heaven! he lives!—he lives!" she exclaimed.

Then, speaking to Edouard, she said:

"I was so afraid you would die before I could get back."

"Who are you, lady—a mortal or an angel? This seems like what I have read of fairy life," said De Carle.

"I am but a poor, helpless girl, sir, without friend or relative on earth. I escaped from the Indians who killed my father, mother, and brothers, and ran until I found a hiding-place where they could not discover me. Then I wandered on at night until I came to this cavern, and here for years—I think it must be three or four at least—I have hidden, afraid to try to reach the settlements for fear the savages would capture me again. Last night, in the dreadful turmoil of fire, I thought I heard the cry of a human being. I went out to the brook that runs close by, where I got these fish, and I found you fainting. I dragged you out of the water and brought you here, though I was scared almost to death. Snakes and wild beasts were on every side, driven to the water by the fire. It was dreadful, and I did not wonder that you swooned. You were fearfully burned, too."

"Yes. I know not how I escaped, for I was surrounded by flames as I ran. I cannot conceive how far. It was a fearful race for life."

"Yet you live, and I look on what I feared I should never see again—the face of one of my race. Oh, you will never leave me alone here?"

"No, I will never leave you alone, but I hope to find friends searching for me who will take us both away from such solitude."

"Ah, sir, I have learned to love it. I know I have no friends or relatives living; where could I go to, or how live better than I live here? I can trap and catch game, and fish—all that I need to eat. When my clothes were wearing out, I made new ones from the skins of animals that I trapped. If it were not so lonely I should be happier here than anywhere else. And now that you are here, I shall not be lonely any longer."

"I know not how long I must stay a burden on your hands," sighed the artist. "I tried to rise just now and could not."

"I will help you, dress your wounds, and do all I can to make you happy."

"You are an angel."

"No, sir; I am only a poor, helpless orphan."

"Your name, please, that I may speak it in my grateful prayers."

"Eva Stamford, sir. What is yours?"

"Edouard de Carle. I am a Frenchman, and an artist."

A Ministering Angel.

"And yet speak our language so well?"

"Yes, lady; I learned it when I was young from my own mother's lips."

"Call me Eva, please. Is your mother living?"

"No; she died in the same year with my father. The cholera swept them off in its tide. It was a sad loss, Eva."

"Then you, too, are an orphan! Oh, be contented here all your life. I will be your sister, and we can be so happy. The Indians have never come near this place. I think they have some superstition about the cataract near by. I cannot see why else they avoid the vicinity, for game is plenty all about, and the waters are alive with fish."

"We will see. I have promised not to leave you alone here," said the artist, "and I will not break my promise."

"Oh, thank you, sir."

"Eva, call me Edouard."

"Edouard—dear Edouard!"

The impetuous girl bent and kissed him in her pure innocence, without a thought of wrong. Blushing then, she raised her head and said:

"I forget—you must be hungry. I will build a fire and cook fish and meat for you."

"Will not the smoke draw our enemies?" he asked.

"No, Edouard—it mingles, through a passage in the cave, with the spray of the waterfall. It cannot be seen outside."

She now took down the torch, which she had thrust between two great arms of crystal, and, going to a nook a little distance away, she took from a huge pile of dried wood what she needed and quickly lighted a fire, where smouldering embers told that she had often built it before.

The artist watched her in silent wonder. It seemed so strange, that she all alone, so young—for she surely had not seen more than sixteen years—could learn to live for herself, and by herself, so well."

"Sweet Eva—I grieve that I cannot help you," he said.

"If you did not suffer pain, I would be glad that you cannot," she replied; "for it is joy for me to serve you."

"Again I must say, dear Eva, that you are almost an angel."

"Don't make me out an angel, Edouard, for I fear I'll fly away. All the angels I ever saw painted had wings."

"I hope, Eva, some day to paint you without wings. I love to paint beautiful pictures."

"And I shall so love to look at them. But keep quiet and rest till I have something cooked. Then we will eat."

* * * * *

"I am stronger now—a great deal stronger, Eva!" said Edouard de Carle as he rose from his couch of furs, and tottered towards the rocky shelf which the girl used as a seat and table.

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

It was three days after his rescue, and he had slept almost half the time, watched by her after she had applied a cooling balsam to his burns and wounds.

"I am glad to hear you say so; but you are yet very weak. Even a little exercise is too much for you."

"Yet I must take it, dear Eva. There are those whom I am bound to assist in the hands of merciless savages, or, perhaps, recaptured by worse white men. The lady who came from France with me to find her cousin, and her female companion, deserve my aid, and——"

"Do you love that lady, Edouard?"

Eva asked the question abruptly, and her eyes seemed more eager in her questioning than her tongue as she gazed into his.

"Eva, she is too far above me in social position, in wealth, for me to dare to love her."

"Above you, Edouard? Anything living above you? It cannot be!"

"Ah, dear child, you do not know the world as I do. A man may be gifted with every noble attribute of heart and brain, possess genius beyond all his mates, be nobly formed and perfect in feature, yet, if he be of common birth, or poor, all the attributes that I have named are too weak to lift him into what is known as society."

"Then the Creator who gives man and woman grace, beauty of form and face, intellect and genius, has nothing to do with society?" said Eva sharply.

"Not much, I fear," said Edouard sadly.

"Then I never want to mingle in society, should I ever again get in that outer world where it exists. Edouard, we are better off here."

"If we lived for ourselves—perhaps yes," said the artist. "But it is higher and better to live for others than it is to live for ourselves."

"Who teaches that?" said Eva.

"Really I cannot say. But it is taught in books and precepts."

"Nature does not teach it. Nature tells us to take care of ourselves."

"Then, my fair enthusiast, why do you care for me? Why did you save me from a horrible death? Why are you trying now to give me strength and hope?"

Blushing and confused, poor Eva knew not what to say. Her actions were indeed contradictory of her philosophy.

"You do not answer," he said, smiling.

"Because I cannot," she stammered. "Yes I can, too. I helped you first because I was sorry for you, and now, because I love to do it. It seems as if you were sent here to comfort me, poor lone orphan that I am, and all that I can do for you is only too little."

Pards Well Met.

"Dear child, you are as good and kind as you can be to me. You are indeed a ministering angel."

"Then you will not leave me?"

"I have said I would not. But I will take you with me when I am well enough to go from here. For I must go, if for nothing more than to seek help to send to those who need help so much."

"Alas, you will go from safety into danger. But there is one comfort. I will share the danger with you. But we will not talk of it yet. I will go out and see if the prairie fire has lost its fury, and if there is any game left for my traps and snares."

"Do not expose yourself to danger, dear child."

"No fear. I think the Indians dread to approach this waterfall, for I have seen from my hiding-place parties come near on either side, but they have always turned away before they got here!"

"Perhaps so. But there are bad white men abroad, and if you or I fall into their hands, then we may well bid farewell to hope, and look for death, or even worse. Again I pray you be careful. I feel as if some danger were hovering about us—yet I cannot say why I feel so."

"Heaven sends warnings, I believe," said Eva solemnly. "My mother talked as you are talking only the night before the Indian band broke into our camp and murdered all but me—I shall never forget it while I live—and my poor father laughed at what he called her whims. But I hope better fortune awaits us two. I hope that Heaven will guard and shield you from harm, for you are very dear to me."

Edouard sighed. Almost insensibly Eva was becoming very dear to him. He began to feel it, yet it seemed as if it were treason in his heart towards peerless Adeline Cherchille.

CHAPTER X.

PARDS WELL MET.

IT will be remembered that Big Elk, the noblest Pawnee of his tribe, had, after delivering the rescued captives over to the commanding officer of the troops, set out again to look for Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack, whom he believed to be wandering about somewhere in search of the trail.

Big Elk rode till night set in, and then camped to rest his braves and feed his horses. On that night a fearful storm swept over his camp; but, used to the tempests and tornadoes of the plains, he and his warriors met it without a murmur.

The storm passed with the night, and then, arranging signals by which they could reunite, and appointing a place

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

of rendezvous, the Pawnee chief scattered his men so as to sweep a large extent of territory in search of the missing men or their trail.

With three braves only as his companions, Big Elk rode off on a course chosen by himself, scanning every hill and valley closely as he went along, and for miles did not break the pace. When he did there were four columns of smoke seen, all in different directions. Pointing to these, he said:

"It is either the hand of the Evil One who lights so many fires, or it is the will of the Great Spirit that we should ride apart. If any smoke we see is made by our people, the one who finds it must send up three smokes and an arrow shot apart to call the rest to him. Ride!"

To each warrior he signified a course leading to one of the smokes, and he reserved that farthest away to the far north-west as the one for himself.

The braves rode away swiftly, each towards his designated point, while the chief, alone, dashed off at the full speed of his horse towards the far-off hills. Thus he rode for hours, when the smoke-sign had disappeared, looking back once in a while to see if other signals were made in his rear.

At last he halted, for he saw three pillars of smoke rising south of him a long way off, but while he gazed some sound caused him to turn short round, and he saw between him and the sky, on the crest of a ridge scarce a mile away, a number of horses, with four figures in full sight—two men and two women.

To properly describe what next happened we must for a few moments leave Big Elk and follow the movements of other important characters in our story.

It will be remembered that Texas Jack, with his portion of the Sioux braves, rode up the stream in search of the trail of those who had carried away Adeline Cherchille and Lucille Breton. Discarding the idea of carrying torches, the scout merely halted where the bank looked hard to see if any tracks had left it there, for he knew that he was tracking an old hand, and judged what the man would do to conceal his traces. The glare of the fires beyond the river made all the light he needed.

It was rather a slow march, for the stops were frequent, and the horses very tired from their long race in the afternoon, and when they reached the place where a small stream came tumbling in from the north-west the morning star was rising.

"We will halt and feed our horses here, for I want to look around by daylight," said Texas Jack to the Sioux in their own tongue.

The latter, who had been ordered by Wide Mouth to obey him, were only too glad to stop, for they were tired and hungry. While the horses went into the tender grass with

Pards Well Met.

heartly appetites, as it grew rich near the mouth of the brook, the braves took from their wallets some of the dried buffalo-meat which they always carry on a march, if they have it to carry, and munched away with great satisfaction.

Texas Jack, full only of one thought—how to find the trail that he was after—waited impatiently for a little more light. He knew that no better place to leave the main river, and still conceal the route, could be found than this, and here he wished to make a careful examination. Daydawn found him looking along the stream to see if some stone newly-upturned, some careless crumbling of the bank, would not reveal the signs he so anxiously wished to see.

For these signs he looked in vain, but suddenly an object met his eye which caused every vein in his body to thrill with gladness. It was a slipper, a small embroidered slipper, and on it five letters in scarlet silk—"Addie."

"She has been here, and purposely has she cast that slipper where it would lodge against the bank!" he said in a gleeful tone. "Now, Mr. Lasalle, we have found your trail in spite of your cunning, for I feel pretty certain it is you and one of your men who have carried off my cousin and her friend."

Texas Jack, with more romance than he ever felt before, actually kissed the slipper which had pressed the girl's foot, and then placed it inside his buckskin hunting-shirt next to his heart. He went a little way further up the stream and found the mate to the first, which was as reverentially treated as that had been. He also found tracks in a still, wide spot in the brook where the current had not been strong enough to wash them away. Satisfied now which way the hapless women had been taken, the brave scout hurried back to the spot where the horses had been feeding and resting.

So full of his thoughts about Addie was our hero that not until they were ready to start did he think about making the smoke-signal agreed upon with Wide Mouth to tell of the discovered trail. Then he sent a warrior for some damp grass, and while he heaped the dry fuel high until it blazed hot and fiercely, an armful of grass was thrown upon it. Instantly in the still, breezeless air the smoke rose in a white column till it seemed to reach higher than the few lazy clouds away up in the zenith.

Texas Jack did not stay to await the junction of the other party, but rode on at once at a gallop, for his horses were well fed and rested. Riding in two lines, so as to be sure to take the trail when it left the brook, the scout and his Sioux comrades sped forward towards a hilly country, growing rougher and more cut-up as they advanced.

Suddenly, where the little stream bent to the left in a small valley, Texas Jack discovered faint marks on a rocky ridge that bore off at a right angle towards a steep mountain. Examining it a few seconds, he felt that all the party had

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

left the stream here and were heading into the mountains. Taking the lead and calling all the Indians to follow, he darted away along this ridge, keeping his eye on the signs, faint as they were, as only a scout can.

More and more difficult was the route as they now went on, leading along the steep cliffs, down into dark ravines, and up steep ascents; but the trail was plain—that was the best of it.

"We are gaining on them!" said Texas Jack to his red followers when, about midday, he halted at a stream which came tumbling through a valley. "The mud hasn't settled where they stirred it up in crossing here."

Ascending a steep hill, he caught a glimpse far ahead of the party he was trailing, and it seemed as if they were almost in rifle range. Going on a little way, he saw they were ascending another steep hill by a ravine so narrow and difficult that one man could defend it against many, and he dared not show himself or party till he thought the others were out of the pass and on the next ridge, when he spurred swiftly forward to ascend the ravine himself.

Texas Jack was fairly entered in it, and was pressing on with all speed the difficulties would allow, when he heard a mocking yell above him. Looking up, hideous in paint as well as hateful ugliness, he saw Jacques Lasalle.

"Trapped, my would-be Marquis of Omohundro!" yelled the wretch. "I, Jacques Lasalle, chief of the Red Brotherhood, have your pretty cousin in my care, and mighty good care I'll take of her! Let that be your consolation as you sing your death-song!"

Texas Jack did not speak, but quick as thought he raised his rifle to his shoulder. But quicker yet the head of Lasalle disappeared behind a huge rock, and the next instant Texas Jack saw, to his horror, that the great rock itself was moving, threatening to come crashing down the ravine!

The Indians, terror-stricken, turned to flee, rushing back down the narrow ravine, but the scout, seeing but one chance, sprang to avail himself of it.

A long, trailing vine—one of those creepers peculiar to rocky lands—ascended the perpendicular cliff to his left. Dropping his rifle, he grasped this, and, hand over hand, like a sailor ascending a rope, he clambered up the cliff, while the huge rock, followed by an avalanche of stones, came thundering, crashing by, beneath him, covering in an instant the entire party of Sioux, and raising such a cloud of dust that Jack, under its cover, reached a safe place far up the cliff, unseen by the wretch who had planned his destruction. So near, too, that from his perch among some sheltering bushes the scout heard the taunting cry of Lasalle:

"That ends the hopes of Texas Jack and stops pursuit! We can take the journey easy now."

Pards Well Met.

Texas Jack could see, beyond the ruffian and his mate, who of course was Mormon Ben, two women standing, white with horror and despair. He knew that now it would be impolitic to reveal his existence to Lasalle, for the latter watched the ravine until the dust settled, and, seeing no sign of a living man or horse—all having, indeed, been crushed and buried but Texas Jack himself—believed the work of destruction to be complete.

The course of Lasalle's party now lay along a narrow ridge, separated from other similar ridges by valleys or gorges, so deep that sunshine could reach them only in the hour near noonday. Like a levelled road, the extreme back of this ridge was treeless and bare, being a smooth, dark rock, showing no sign as they passed over it.

"Cap'n, how long shall we have to stretch over this sort of ground? It will be dry campin' and poor feed for the animals, I'm afraid," said Mormon Ben.

"We'll strike better ground before three hours are gone by," said Lasalle. "I've gone the route before. There's a natural bridge to cross, some caves to enter and pass through, then another gully to go down instead of up, and we'll reach a little bit of Paradise, where running water, green grass, and a shelter not made by human hands will hold us good and snug just as long as we want to stay. Hallo!—look over there to the south'ard!"

"Thunder! There's a redskin there alone, well armed and mounted! He sees us, too!" cried Ben.

"Little good would it do him, even if he had a score more at his back," said Lasalle. "He can't scale this ridge anywhere within six or eight miles, to my knowledge, either way, and before he can make that distance we shall be gone, leaving no trace behind us."

Meanwhile, keeping under cover of every rock and bush after he reached the crest of the ridge, Texas Jack pushed close after Lasalle, Mormon Ben, and the helpless women as fast as he could go without exposing himself.

Thus speeding on he was so near that, had he been able to keep his repeating-rifle when he escaped his last peril, he would have had the two wretches in his power; for his aim, so quick, was deadly at six hundred yards, and he was surely as close as that when the two villains discovered the Indian and halted for a moment to look at him. But they did not know, as Texas Jack did, who that Indian was.

The scout, as keen of eye as the eagle, had recognised the heroic Pawnee, Big Elk, even so far off; and now his first desire was to communicate with him.

Creeping quickly to the very edge of the cliff, the scout threw out the whole strength of his voice in a scream like that of an eagle angered at the miss of a victim in its swoop. So loud and shrill was his scream that it reached the quick

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

ear of Lasalle, then fully a quarter of a mile away, and he turned in his saddle and looked back.

"Heaven favours me!" murmured Texas Jack as a real eagle, scared from its nest, rose high in the air almost over his head; for Lasalle, seeing it, seemed satisfied and rode on, while Big Elk, who had heard a cry like that before when there was no eagle in sight, stood still and looked and waited.

Texas Jack waited, too, till Lasalle and his party were out of sight, and then again he gave the whole force of his strong lungs in a wild, air-piercing scream.

The eagle had soared into a speck almost out of sight, and Big Elk now knew, as he had already suspected, that the sound came from a different source. Closely he scanned the cliff, and when for an instant only Texas Jack rose to his full height and then sank down again, he seemed intuitively to understand that a friend sought to communicate with him.

Dismounting—for he could not reach the foot of the cliff with his horse, owing to the nature of the fearful ravine below—Big Elk moved down the hill, and, springing from rock to rock, here descending terrible steeps and again climbing others, he gradually approached the place where Texas Jack, using a handkerchief for a signal, lay at the edge of the steep cliff patiently awaiting his approach.

It was almost night when Big Elk got a position directly under where Texas Jack was, and before this time he had recognised his old leader, and by signs made his recognition known.

Now fully five hundred feet apart, an almost perpendicular cliff marking the distance, though they could talk, the study was how Big Elk could get up, and, with Texas Jack, follow the trail of Lasalle.

The scout loosened the long hide lasso from his belt, but it would not reach more than one-fifth of the way.

Glancing down, he saw that there were several inches where strong-rooted cedars were growing, and that it would be possible, if he had more line, to lower his lasso and steady Big Elk in an ascent from point to point.

In an instant his strong hunting-shirt of buckskin was taken off, and with his keen knife he began to cut it into thongs. Tying these together and adding his scarf and waist-belt, he lowered them to a point which the chief was already trying to reach.

It was a fearful ascent, one which none but the most daring would attempt; but Big Elk, strong and fearless, made it, and at last reached the end of the buckskin thongs. To these he tied his own buckskin hunting-shirt, his belts, and the lariat brought from his own saddle, and let Texas Jack draw them up, so as to strengthen and perfect the line which must support his whole weight in that part of the cliff where no foothold could be found.

Mormon Ben's Treachery.

Texas Jack quickly drew it up, and with ready hand cut up the additional thongs, and, with lariat and lasso, made a rope surely strong enough to bear the weight of the brave Pawnee, knotting it every few feet, so that his hands would not slip in the ascent. Then, securing one end to a cedar tree near the very verge of the cliff, placing his hat between it and the rock to save it from fraying, the scout lowered it to the chief.

In an instant he felt the strain, the swaying to and fro, which told him that Big Elk was risking all in an effort to reach him.

Slower and slower seemed the vibrations of the rope, for night had now set in, and he had to judge by feeling rather than sight how Big Elk was succeeding. At last, bending over the cliff as much as he dared, he heard the hard breathing which told him that the gallant redskin was almost up.

Grasping the tree with his left arm while he lay prone on the cliff, even clinging with his foot at the back of a rock, Jack reached down with his right hand until he felt the form of the Pawnee, or rather the plaited scalp-lock which crowned his head.

"Lift—lift—I am heap weak—'most gone!" gasped the chief.

Jack grasped the lock with his strong right hand, and pulled as if he were trying to tear the hair from the head of a living foe rather than trying thus to help a living friend. But help it was, though rough and harsh, and by it the Pawnee an instant later was at the crest of the cliff, where Texas Jack could grasp his arms and draw him into safety.

Once there, breathless, exhausted, the chief lay for almost half an hour utterly worn out and helpless, while Texas Jack, almost as badly off from the strain on his mind, as well as his long, exhausting march, was not much better off.

Night, now fairly set in, made it next to impossible for them to go forward, and they well knew they could see no trail if they did. So, after resting until both were calm and composed, the scout and the Indian crept up to a snug resting-place under some cedar bushes, and there lay down side by side.

CHAPTER XI.

MORMON BEN'S TREACHERY.

HURRYING on after his last halt, when he saw the eagle, whose scream he supposed he had heard, rise high in the air, Lasalle pushed forward for full a league before he checked his speed at all, and during this time he neither spoke nor looked back.

Halting just before the night closed in, where the ridge narrowed to a bare peak hardly wide enough for a foothold, he dismounted.

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

"Our horses have been true and faithful, and it seems hard to repay them thus, but we are done with them now, and they must either perish for lack of food and water on this dry ridge, for the ravine up which we came to gain it is blocked, or we must end their misery here."

"What, kill 'em, cap'n? That is hard. I'd as lief kill——"

And Ben, pausing, looked what he did not say, as his eyes fell glowering and fierce upon the women captives.

"They'll die quick enough. I'm not done with them!" said the ruffian Lasalle. "But the horses may as well go over the cliff, and on the wrong side."

Then, without the slightest hesitation, he drove his knife hilt-deep into the heart of the noble animal which had carried him so far and so well.

With a shudder and a half-human sounding moan the horse staggered, and, pushed by his hand, reeled off the cliff and fell mangled far down upon the jagged rocks. Then, making the women dismount, the heartless wretch disposed of their horses in the same way—killing each and pushing them over the cliff.

This done, Lasalle turned to his confederate and bade him dispose of his horse, too, telling him that more horses could be had, when they required them, from Indian corrals not far away.

It scarcely seems credible, but Mormon Ben, who loved to boast of his inhuman atrocities, shrank from killing his own horse.

"I don't like to do it, cap'n," said he. "If you want to kill him, just you do it while I turn my head away."

Lasalle laughed. But he disposed of the horse as he had done the others, first taking, as before, the lariat from the saddle. He had now four lariats. Two of these he fastened together, and, securing them to a pillar-like rock, lowered them over the side of the cliff where the dead horses were.

"Should that red or any of his kind come here they'll think we've gone that way, and taken to water in the stream that runs just beyond," said Lasalle. "But that is not our course."

Knotting the other two lariats, he proceeded on a very short distance, where on the other side the ravine seemed scarce twenty yards wide, though quite deep, between the ridge on which they stood and another, and here he laid the middle of the lasso, or united lariats, over another rocky pillar, so that both ends were pendent over the side of the cliff. This done, he secured his rifle and ammunition to his back and made ready for a descent to a ledge just in reach of the ends of the lasso—a ledge jutting out, but apparently hardly wide enough for the foothold of man.

"Ben," said he, "I shall swing down there to receive the women. I know just where I'm going, for I've been there

Mormon Ben's Treachery.

before. When I get down, haul up the lariats and fasten the women on one at a time, and lower away to me."

"But, cap'n, where'll you stow 'em? There isn't room to stow more than you down there."

"Room? You'll soon see room enough for an army. Why, man, you're just getting into the hollow region of the Big Rockies. I could show you caves within a day's ride that could hide ten thousand men."

"Oh, now I understand," said Ben. "Swing down, then, and I'll send the women to you in a jiffy."

The head ruffian did not hear him, nor note the ferocious glare in his eyes, or there would surely have been a change in that programme.

Lasalle seized the doubled rope and boldly swung himself off the cliff. Then, descending hand under hand, he was in a few seconds safe on the ledge. Letting go the rope, he passed out of sight for a moment, and then he came out upon the ledge ready to receive the helpless women when Ben should lower them down.

But now a disappointment awaited him, and he, villain as he was, found that a more cunning one existed in his subordinate. For Ben, having drawn up the rope, looked down with a fiendish sneer.

"How is it down there, cap'n? Comfortable, eh?"

"Yes. Hurry, and let down the women."

"I can't accommodate you, cap'n. I'm going to keep the beauties for myself. I'm a Mormon, you know, and these two gals will be welcome additions to the State of Utah. Good-night, cap'n—good-night, and pleasant dreams to you."

"Ben, you dare not, on your oath, desert me here!" yelled the baffled ruffian.

"Cap'n, oaths aren't much to me. I've been a Mormon too long to set much faith on them. Take it easy. I'm goin' to make my way to the Mormon settlements now with my prizes, and if you'll come there we'll settle up. I belong to the Danites."

Lasalle yelled out frightful curses, but Mormon Ben replied only with a taunting laugh, while he bade the women turn and follow him.

* * * * *

Texas Jack and Big Elk slept almost as soundly as the rocks under them until the grey of dawn, when, as is usual with men who are sure to rise at daybreak in camp life, both awoke.

Texas Jack, springing to his feet, seized the lasso which he had coiled the night before, and cried out to Big Elk:

"Up, my red brother—up and let us be moving. We can see to take the trail now."

The Pawnee bounded to his feet, and, picking up the gun

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

which he had slung behind him before he had commenced the fearful ascent, said:

"Go on. Big Elk is ready."

Neither thought of food or drink, though, no doubt, hunger and thirst would have been assuaged were the means at hand; but looking quickly for the scarcely-to-be-seen trail Texas Jack found it and hurried on, Big Elk close behind.

Not a word was spoken by either until they reached the spot where the horses of Lasalle's party had been sacrificed. Here, with an exclamation of surprise, both Texas Jack and Big Elk halted to make close examination.

Taking up the inner end of the lariats, which depended over the cliff where the horses had been turned off, Texas Jack examined the knot.

"No weight has been on these ropes," he said; "the knot is not tightened. They have been thrown over here to mislead us. Lasalle doesn't think I'm alive to follow him, or he wouldn't be so careless."

"He think Whirling Rope dead, and he doesn't know that Big Elk is on his trail," said the Indian.

Then, crossing to the other side of the narrow ridge, he examined another rock. The moss had been cut away on its back angles, and in front of the cliff there were other marks.

"They have gone over on this side, down into the gulch, it would seem," said Texas Jack.

"Maybe hole in rock to hide in part way down. See where there been rock broke 'way down," added Big Elk.

Jack saw marks on the ledge, and quickly prepared the lasso and rope which he had used the night before to aid Big Elk to reach the crest of the ridge. Doubling it, he cast the bight or middle part over the rock, and, though only armed with his knife, swung himself over.

Reaching the ledge, he at once disappeared inside, and Big Elk made ready to follow him, when Texas Jack came out and said:

"The trail is here. Come down quick, red brother, for they are not far away."

Big Elk instantly lowered himself down, and found Texas Jack standing in a deep aperture or avenue, which appeared to extend far back in the mountain—how far he could not imagine, since the light went but a little way. But as a sign that this place had been visited not only lately, but long before, there was a heap of resinous splinters torn from pine-trees—knots which could be used for torches or fires, as occasion necessitated.

Texas Jack did not wait an instant after Big Elk reached his side, but seizing a bunch of splinters lighted one of the most resinous.

As the blaze flashed up they could see that they were in

Mormon Ben's Treachery.

the entrance of a cavern of great extent, and, calling to Big Elk to secure a bundle of wood to use when his supply failed, the scout hurried forward.

The sight of a large footstep, fresh and plain, in a small spot of soft marl satisfied him that he was on the right track, and as the cave or subterranean hall seemed to trend in but one course, with no branches, Texas Jack rushed on, not pausing to look for other signs. As his torch burned low he quickly added another splinter, and thus they sped on.

"It seems as if we'd never find an end to this hole!" muttered Texas Jack at last, tired and annoyed, as he passed over the rocky road, to see no trace of those he followed.

Big Elk followed, speaking never a word, but keeping his eyes on the alert for every sign, his ears sharp for every sound.

"We are descending all the time. I wonder where we'll fetch up?" said Texas Jack as he lighted his last splinter.

"Better light yonder. We see day in a little time," said Big Elk, pointing ahead.

"Yes, and not far off, either. Lasalle must be well posted hereabouts; but why he should hurry out of such snug quarters I can't see."

The scout said no more, but hastened forward to where a faint glimmer of white showed an opening, even as did the draught of air pressing towards them which almost extinguished their torches.

Both of the men were almost breathless when they at last reached a small place of exit from the vast cavern—an aperture so low that they had to stoop to get out.

Pausing, they found themselves on a level with a beautiful valley, through which ran a small brook bordered by a savannah of grass, while beyond it wooded hills rose.

Just where they left the cave there was a strip of sand a few yards wide, and over this no human foot could go without leaving an impress, for it was soft and white, and sheltered from rain by the overhanging cliff.

"Only one track—the trail of a single man!" muttered Texas Jack, in bitterness and disgust. "Big Elk, we have got on the wrong trail. My cousin and her friend are left behind somewhere."

"Not on the wrong trail while he lives! Look! Does not Whirling Rope know that man?"

The Pawnee pointed to a human being who was ascending the cliffs near by at fearful risk, clinging to trailing vines, roots, clefts in the rock—everything he could reach for assistance.

This man was a good rifle-shot away, but Texas Jack knew him at a single glance—it was Jacques Lasalle!

"Halt where you are! Move hand or foot, except to get back here, and I'll send a bullet through your carcase!"

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

shouted Texas Jack, snatching the rifle which Big Elk carried and bringing it to his own shoulder.

Lasalle knew the voice. He knew, too, that the man who spoke was the deadliest shot on the plains.

"Hold your fire!" he shouted in reply. "Hold your fire! I will come down!"

Texas Jack and Big Elk hurried to the foot of the cliff where the chief of the Red Brotherhood must come in his descent, and there Texas Jack covered him with his rifle as he slowly came down.

"Don't turn your face, or I'll bore you through and through! Don't turn your face till Big Elk, the Pawnee, takes off your belt and unslings your rifle!" cried Texas Jack as the feet of Lasalle touched the ground.

The ruffian stood still. He knew that Texas Jack would not hesitate to carry out his threat.

Big Elk took off his belt, with the knife and revolvers attached, and unslung his repeating-rifle. Both were handed to Texas Jack, while the latter returned to the Pawnee his own weapon.

"Now, about face and report!" said Texas Jack to Lasalle. "What are you doing here alone? Where is my cousin? Don't stand glowering at me, but speak up. Your life hangs on a slim chance if you act ugly!"

"Shoot, confound you, shoot!"

"Not just yet. You'll taste horror before you die if you do not answer me, you thieving, murdering wretch!"

"Me take his scalp now!" said Big Elk, and drew his knife in readiness.

Lasalle saw that he had no chance. Two well-armed men stood before him, both cool, skilful, and hot with hate.

"I was trying to get up there to follow Mormon Ben, who played a mean trick on me, running the women off somewhere after he drew up the lariat that I used to get down to the cave. If I could set eyes on him I'd strangle the life out of him!"

"Where were your horses when this was done?"

"I had killed them all to hide the trail, meaning to get the women into the cave and off through this valley. I'm telling the truth."

"I know you are about the horses. Where do you think Mormon Ben, as you call him, has gone with the women?"

"Back over the ridge. He knows no other route. He boasted, after he had drawn up the lariat and I stood on the ledge below cursing him, that he would take the two women to Utah."

"He could not have passed us—we were on the ledge," said Texas Jack.

"We were heap tired. Sleep all same as bear after long run," suggested Big Elk.

Mormon Ben's Treachery.

"It is true. He might have passed us. The sooner we are back in search of his trail the better. Come, Big Elk! We will go back through the cave and up the lariat, which I forgot and left behind us."

"Hold on a moment! There is a nearer way!" said Lasalle, while his eyes flashed with a new idea—another plan of wickedness.

"Was it the route you were taking?" asked Texas Jack, pointing to the cliff above.

"No, not exactly; it's a route that will enable us to cut him off, for the ridge bends like the letter 'S' almost."

"Jacques Lasalle, if I trust you, give you your life and maybe liberty, will you guide me honestly to the spot where you think he'll pass?"

"Where he has gone, more likely—for he'll keep going just as long as the women can walk."

"Great Heaven! One, my cousin, is without shoes, too! Here are her slippers, by which I struck your trail."

"So! The witch dropped them unknown to me. She is keen!"

"You have not answered. Will you or will you not guide me?"

"S'pose I don't?"

"You'll stay here for crow-bait, and I'll take my chance on a lone hand!"

Texas Jack laid his hand on the butt of one of the revolvers just belted to his side.

"I'll go," said Lasalle. "I'm not exactly sick of life yet."

Turning, he faced off south-west down the valley.

"Follow me and keep going!" he said.

"Go ahead!" said Texas Jack—"go ahead, remembering who is behind you and what I carry!"

Closely followed by Texas Jack and Big Elk, Jacques Lasalle made his way along the base of the cliff.

They were hurrying on, when suddenly from far up the cliff ahead of them came a wild, unearthly scream, and halting as if by an uncontrollable impulse they looked forward and up, just in time to see a human body come tumbling over and over down the terrible steep. Halfway down it struck a projecting rock, and there, faintly struggling for an instant, its course was stopped.

While the three men halted, horrified at the sight, the forms of two women were seen, but only for an instant. They were apparently hurrying away from a point directly above the fallen man.

"A thousand to one it's Mormon Ben, and they've pushed him off!"

Lasalle muttered this to himself, but he spoke loud enough for Texas Jack to hear him, and the latter in a second took in the idea.

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

"Yes!" he exclaimed. "The heroic girl who bared her feet to leave me a sign has taken him off his guard and hurried him off the cliff. I see it all. She is worthy of the blood that runs in her veins. She has the spirit of an Omohundro, and I glory in the thought! She must know that friends are within reach!"

Then he exerted all his power and sent forth a loud shout. Hurrying forward he repeated the cry, while he with the other two looked up, hoping to see the women return and look over, for they had disappeared. They did not see them, however, but the mangled body on the rocks above had enough life in it to struggle over so that the face looked down.

"It is indeed Mormon Ben!" said Lasalle, shuddering, for he could see the white agony, which no tongue could describe, in the distorted features of the dying wretch.

When the three came beneath the victim he was motionless and dead.

"The women have not seen us. We must hasten to a spot where we can climb the cliff to join them," said Texas Jack.

So he hurried forward, driving Lasalle up with a threat that if he hung back he should feel cold steel.

They kept close under the base of the cliff so as to see the first place where ascent was possible; and this doubtless added to the improbabilities of their being seen from above.

Thus they kept on until almost night, and it seemed as if the cliff grew higher and more inaccessible the further they went. When questioned, Lasalle pretended that he was mistaken in the distance to cross the ledge which intersected this—that he had hoped to find it before, et cetera.

"I think you're fooling, Jacques Lasalle!" said Texas Jack quietly; "and if I keep thinking so till sunset Big Elk here will doubtless wear your scalp at his belt before the evening star rises!"

"It is all very well for you to threaten!" said Lasalle sullenly. "You carry weapons!"

"Ay, and the will, too! You deserve as little mercy as Mormon Ben—less, indeed, for he had one good trait. He remembered a kindness. Now that he has gone under I'll tell you how Buffalo Bill and I and the French artist escaped from you in that night march. Mormon Ben had been saved from hanging once by Buffalo Bill. To pay him for that favour Ben cut him loose that night. When you sent Basil La Mort back we dropped him in his tracks and then got away. You followed us back, I reckon, and that's why your band and you have got parted and broken up."

Lasalle uttered a fearful oath. Till now he had not thought for an instant of any treason in his own party. Had Mormon Ben been living then and in reach of his hand, he would have gone at him with the ferocity of a tiger. A moment later he hissed out:

In Doubtful Hands.

"I thought someone besides the Fiend had a hand in your getting off. Oh!—what's that?"

A wild halloo coming from far in their rear had reached the quick ear of Lasalle, and he spoke just as Big Elk and Texas Jack caught its repetition.

"Someone is following us. We will rest a minute or two and see who it is," said Texas Jack.

"It is Long Rifle. I know him by his run and his big white hat," said Big Elk.

"Yes, it is Buffalo Bill, coming like a river boat under full steam," said Texas Jack.

Buffalo Bill, evidently pretty well tired, still came on, but seeing them at a halt, did not come at a run, as he was doing when they first saw him.

When Cody reached his pard a few words sufficed to explain the situation to him, and he said:

"By all means let's go ahead and find a way up the cliff."

CHAPTER XII.

IN DOUBTFUL HANDS.

FOR a brief while we will return to Basil La Mort.

Left alone by the few members of the Red Brotherhood who went back to answer the smoke-signal of recall which they saw rising, the villain thought that nothing short of a wretched and a lingering death awaited him. Too cowardly at heart to end his own misery, though he had weapons with which to do it, just fiend enough to dread the judgment after death, his agony was complete.

La Mort's wounds, coupled with a fever that set in, made him wild, and this alone saved his worthless life; for a maniac or an idiot, if able to travel, might wander through the most hostile and savage tribes of Indians in the West unharmed. Uncivilised though they are, redskins seem to feel that he is sacred whose brain has been touched by the finger of the Great Spirit.

Therefore, when mad—so mad that he tore tufts of hair from face and head—a band of wandering Utes came along, and they took pity on the hapless paleface, dressed his wounds, and then put him on a horse, to which they had to tie him, for he was too weak to hold on.

Such treatment partially restored reason to the wretch when his fever was abated, for, hearing the chief speak to him in broken English at a water-course where they stopped, he replied. But it was not until they settled down in camp that any actual conversation was held.

"Who is paleface! Where is he going to?"

That was the question which first brought any real sign of reason from La Mort.

Raving wildly before, he now stopped, and looked intently

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

at the red face which bent over him as he lay on a buffalo robe.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"In the lodge of the Wolf-Slayer," said the Indian. "You are heap sick. Had you been well your scalp would hang there"—and the chief pointed to a long string of those ornaments stretching from side to side on the back part of his lodge.

"Sick—yes, I've been sick. I was alone, dying on the prairie. I called for help, but no one came."

"The paleface talks crooked. The Utes came. They would have killed the paleface, but the Wolf-Slayer said no. The Great Spirit has touched him here"—and the chief raised his hand to his head.

"Yes. I have been crazed—I know it," said La Mort. "But I am better now."

"Ugh! It may now be well for the paleface. What has he to give for his life? The Utes are poor."

"You have taken all that belongs to me. My pistols are belted to your side."

"Yes, paleface no need them when he is sick. The Wolf-Slayer will keep them. Has the paleface any friends where the iron road runs?"

"Yes; rich friends, if I can find them, who will give the red man guns and horses for my life, if he takes good care of me."

"Ugh! How will Wolf-Slayer know where to find them?"

"Does he know where the great village is called Omaha?"

"Yes. The Wolf-Slayer went there once on the iron road. He drank fire-water too much, and the palefaces put him in the calaboose. Next sun an old man told him to go back to his people, and to let fire-water alone."

"Then if I can write a letter to a banker there, I can get horses and guns for the Wolf-Slayer, if he treats me well."

"The paleface means the speaking-bark?" and the chief imitated the act of writing, to show what he meant.

"Yes," said La Mort.

"We are long ways from the great village," said the Ute. "The Sioux and the Pawnees hunt over the land. If they see us they will fight. The Wolf-Slayer will wait. He will keep the paleface in his lodge, and feed him till he can send a brave to the iron road. Then if the paleface has spoken straight words he will live. If he has told a crooked story, we will burn him to ashes and scatter them to the winds."

So saying, Wolf-Slayer quitted the lodge.

"I must be content. This is better than death," said La Mort; and he looked up at the scalps, at the painted skins which covered the lodge, and tried to think how he could have come there—been spared by these savages.

Playing Possum.

After a while he heard a strange commotion outside. The Indians, yelling with excitement, seemed to be running to and fro, and the chief himself rushed into the lodge, tore down his spear, seized a round shield of hard hide, and hurried forth full of excitement.

The wounded and exhausted white man rose to his feet, staggered to the opening in front of the wigwam, looked out a single second, and then sank with a despairing cry to the ground.

The reason for this strange turn of affairs will be explained in due course.

CHAPTER XIII.

PLAYING POSSUM.

WE can go no further to-night, I'm tired out," muttered Lasalle as night was closing in upon the party. "Kill me if you will—but I can go no further."

And he sank to the ground as if utterly exhausted.

"I'm tired, too," said Texas Jack. "What do you say, Cody—shall we halt and lay by till day comes? If the women yet live they'll not be likely to travel far in the darkness."

"If they're on the ridge, I'm afraid they're in the hands of Wide Mouth again. But he promised to come round and meet me in the valley," replied Buffalo Bill.

"Wide Mouth is a Sioux. If he comes where Big Elk is he will lose his scalp!" said the Pawnee.

"He has fought our enemies, and been a friend to Long Rifle," said Buffalo Bill.

"Then when he comes, Big Elk will go away. For he will not shake hands with a Sioux. It has been war with the Sioux for him since he was a little child. He cannot forget it now that he is getting old."

"He may not come," said Texas Jack. "To-night is to-night, and we are alone. Let to-morrow bring to-morrow, and what it may—it will be time enough then to think. Now we will rest."

So the scouts, with Lasalle under a close watch, halted where a spring bubbled out with a song of silvery gladness from under a ledge, and while one stood guard Big Elk and the other gathered wood for a fire.

The eyes of Lasalle flashed wildly when he saw the spring. He knew by it just where he was, and that he was very near a place where the ascent of the ridge was easy. A careless minute when darkness was dense would be all that he would ask to gain his freedom. But he knew those were not careless men that he had to deal with. Falling back, pretending to be far weaker than he was, he gasped out a request for water.

"I'd give a dog a drink—let alone a man, though he is

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

a wolf in human shape," said Texas Jack as he took his hunting-cup, filled it, and brought it to Lasalle.

The latter did not raise his head, but lay and gasped.

"By thunder, he is about caved in!" said Texas Jack as he lifted up the head of the villain and poured water between his lips.

"Thank you—it's more than I deserve," gasped Lasalle very faintly.

"I know it, but 'twould be against law and justice to let you die a natural death!" said Texas Jack. "I say, Bill, have you got a drop of spirit with you?"

"No, Jack. I am sorry to say I have not. Besides, does he deserve it?"

"Well, no; but I'd like a drop just now to put life into this cuss. I want him to hang on till we can get him where he'll hang better."

"No, no!" exclaimed Lasalle. "Let me die here, and in peace. I'm used up; I haven't eaten a mouthful for days. I tried to swallow some of the dried meat the Pawnee gave me, but it stuck in my throat and wouldn't go down. Just let me lie here. I'll not bother you any more."

The voice was so faint and low, his face looked so white and ghastly, his eyes so dim, and he so hopeless, that bad as he was the scouts felt some pity for him. But they could do nothing more than give him water and keep a fire near his feet till day came to enable them to see game; so they spoke kindly, and sat down near by to wait for daylight. It would be a long wait, they knew, and the scouts, as well as the Pawnee, were very tired; but they were determined to keep watch lest Lasalle, through rest, should grow stronger and try to get away.

After a while they agreed that two should sleep while one watched, and as all three had their arms fast upon them, there seemed no possible danger from that one helpless man.

The watch was kept first by Texas Jack, and when he felt that an hour had gone by he woke up Buffalo Bill, and then took his turn to sleep.

Next came the turn of Big Elk, and the Indian rose, stirred up the fire, took a drink of water, and then paced to and fro in front of the others.

With the glare of the fresh blaze shining in his eyes he did not see that Lasalle was watching his every motion closely and keenly from the commencement of his watch.

Big Elk, thinking of what Buffalo Bill had said about expecting the Sioux, often paused in his march before the fire and, turning his back to it, looked long and earnestly down the valley as if he thought he might see a glimpse of their camp-fires. Then he would glance at the fire, at the sleeping scouts, and at the prisoner, so still that he seemed dead.

Once the Pawnee chief heard the howl of a wolf a long

Justice at a Woman's Hands.

way down the valley. He listened intently, for it might be a signal from a red man's lips instead of a cry from an animal.

This was the moment that Jacques Lasalle had waited for so long, so patiently, while he was mustering all his strength for a desperate rush.

With a bound like that of a panther leaping from its lair, he rose, struck the Indian a mighty blow that sent him reeling forward in the darkness, and the next second the villain was bounding off with the speed of a deer.

Recovering, the Pawnee fired at what he believed was the flying man, and then Texas Jack and Buffalo Bill woke to learn that the wretch was gone.

"He must have been playing possum when we thought him so weak," said Texas Jack. "No matter. He has got off without arms, and if he doesn't starve in real earnest it will be because there are snakes and snails creeping around. I don't envy him his chances."

"Nor I," said Buffalo Bill. "If we find his trail in the morning, I reckon we'll not be long in coming up to him."

"Me take his scalp when we do!" said Big Elk.

"Take it and be welcome to it," said Jack. "It was folly to spare him when we did. I see it now."

"He has gone up the hill. I hear stones rattle," said Big Elk.

"So much the better. If he doesn't break his neck, we'll find him by his trail when day dawns," said Buffalo Bill. "Till then I don't think we'll make anything by moving. He can never go up these cliffs in the dark. Ah! I'll bet he has ended as Mormon Ben did!"

A sound as if something heavy fell from above, not very far away, came back to their ears, then all was still.

"That's the last of him!" said Jack, almost sure that the sound denoted Lasalle's fall and death.

"Good! Me go and get his scalp when light comes," said Big Elk; and he sat down to spend the rest of the watch by the fire.

CHAPTER XIV.

JUSTICE AT A WOMAN'S HANDS.

THE tragic fate of Mormon Ben had indeed been brought about by Adeline Cherchille. Rendered desperate by the hopeless plight of herself and Lucille, she had crept up to him while he was standing by the cliff edge and pushed him over. Then she and her friend had hurried from the scene, taking with them their late captor's rifle, revolvers, and ammunition, which he had placed upon the ground while peering over the cliff.

In the course of a few hours they discovered a long-disused cabin, and here they took refuge. Almost famished

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

with hunger, Lucille wandered forth, rifle in hand, and was soon fortunate enough to sight and shoot a deer. A hasty meal of roasted venison was prepared and eaten, and the remainder of the carcass was hung upon a tree, adjacent to the cabin, for further use.

As dusk was deepening into night the girls were alarmed by a rustling of dry leaves and twigs. With their sense of hearing strained to catch every sound, their eyes striving to penetrate the gloom around their dying fire, they awaited further developments.

Tramp, tramp, nearer and nearer, until poor Adeline and Lucille were sure it was coming right in upon them, came something which filled their hearts with fear. Then, passing so close that they got a glimpse by the faint light of the fire of some huge animal, it passed on.

"It must be a monster bear—yes, it has smelled the meat that hangs upon the tree," said Adeline in a whisper. "Hark! it has torn it down. Hear it crunching the bones in its horrible jaws! Oh, Heaven grant there may be enough to gorge it! If not, it may come here!"

"Then let us throw on wood and make a blaze to frighten the beast away," said Lucille.

"You may if you like," said Adeline. "We can at least see by the flames how to defend ourselves."

Lucille laid down the rifle and heaped up dry branches on the embers, and with frenzied haste blew them into flame. Then, as the fire flashed up, she rose and seized the rifle again. But as she turned and saw a bear, monstrous in size, coming with glaring eyes towards the cabin, she dropped the gun with a scream of terror. The beast had swallowed all that was to be seen of the deer, and now, licking its jaws, glared fiercely at the fire.

Adeline snatched up the rifle which Lucille had dropped. It was a Spencer repeater, and she knew that seven heavy balls were in its chamber. All her courage rose as that of Lucille vanished.

"Stand firm! I can and will kill it! Throw on more wood to give me light!" she cried to Lucille.

Weeping in her abject terror the woman obeyed. The bear saw her as the fire flashed and crackled brighter and louder, and with a horrible growl moved forward.

"He comes! Oh, Heaven save us! He comes!" screamed Lucille.

Addie said never a word. But her form was drawn to its full height, and not a limb shook.

The bear came slowly on, showing its great fanged teeth, its eyes gleaming like coals of fire.

Raising the rifle to her shoulder, the young heroine glanced fairly over the barrel, looking right into the open

Stirring Novels of Mystery, Love and Adventure.

Mascot Novels

Two New
Numbers on the
First Thursday
of Each Month.

4d.

Post Free from
the Publisher
for 5d. in
Stamps.

EACH ONE A COMPLETE NOVEL.

154. A QUEEN'S ERROR. By Capt. HENRY CURTIS.
155. THE JEW OF PRAGUE. By A. WILSON
BARRETT
156. WITHOUT CONSCIENCE. By EDWIN WOOTON.
157. THE MYSTERY OF FLAT 60. By A. J. SARL.
158. THE LACY TALISMAN. By Mrs. GEO. CORBETT.

OF ALL NEWSAGENTS.

BE SURE IT IS A MASCOT.

GOODSHIP NOVELS 6d.

Pocket-size, in Clear Type.

- THE BLUE TAXI. By A. WILSON BARRETT.
THE BELLE OF THE CONVENT. By FLORENCE
HODGKINSON.
THE LEADING LADY. By ARCHIBALD EYRE.
THE SOUL OF A SHOP GIRL. By CHARLES E.
PEARCE.

ETC., ETC.

*Of all Newsagents, 6d. each, or post free from
the Publisher, 7d. each.*

THE GOODSHIP HOUSE (The Aldine Publishing Company, Ltd.),
Crown Court, Chancery Lane, London, W.C. 2.

THE DIAMOND LIBRARY

Price **2d.**

Contains complete and thrilling Detective, School and Sports Stories—shorter than the novels appearing in this book, but every bit as good.

TWO NEW NUMBERS ARE PUBLISHED EACH MONTH,
the latest titles being:—

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| 136. The Red Heart Vendetta | 138. The Blue Diamond |
| 137. The "Mystery Boy" of
Wyemminster | Mystery |
| | 139. For the Football Cup! |

EACH ONE A LONG, COMPLETE NOVEL.

*Of all Newsagents 2d., or post free from the Publisher, at the
address below, 2½d. each book.*

THE GOODSHIP HOUSE (The Aldine Publishing Co., Ltd.),
Crown Court, Chancery Lane, London, W.C. 2.

THE TRUE BLUE BROTHERHOOD.

THE TRUE BLUE BROTHERHOOD is a world-wide league of fellowship which was founded many years ago for promoting a good understanding amongst boys and young men of all ages.

All readers of this book are eligible to join the True Blue Brotherhood. It being only necessary to fill up the coupon given below, and send it to the President, 1-3, Crown Court, Chancery Lane, London, W.C. 2, enclosing Threepence for the Certificate, Badge, and Secret Signs, which are forwarded to each recruit. Beyond this threepence there is absolutely no expense incurred, and your membership lasts for life, provided you abide by the rules of the Brotherhood. Foreign or Colonial recruits must send exchange coupon for 4d., as foreign stamps are useless in England.

When you have joined, you can get other fellows of your neighbourhood to follow your example and form a local branch of the Brotherhood. Football and athletic clubs can be formed in this way. If you send up names and coupons of six recruits in one envelope you will gain promotion to Lieutenant, while Twelve Recruits will make you a Captain.

RULES OF THE BROTHERHOOD.

The rules which members have to agree to abide by are quite simple:—

1. To be true to themselves and to their friends.
2. To do their best to help one another in time of trouble and distress.
3. To be kind to animals, and prevent cruelty to dumb creatures by others.
4. To strive to stamp out bullying, cowardice, and the use of vulgar language.
5. To be loyal to their country in peace and war.
6. To be truthful, generous, honourable, manly, and brave.
7. To lend a hand in a moment of danger to everybody, whether they be fellow members or not.

NOTE THIS.—Each Recruit must fill up the form below and send it, with threepence in stamps, to the President. Unless this is done membership will not be allowed.

The Official Organs of the True Blue Brotherhood are "The Diamond Library," "The Boys' Own Library," "Buffalo Bill Library," and "Buffalo Bill Novels," and news of the Brotherhood will appear from time to time in those books.

True Blue Brotherhood Coupon.

I wish to join the True Blue Brotherhood. I promise to faithfully keep the Rules.

(Signed) Name.....

Address.....

Justice at a Woman's Hands.

mouth of the fierce animal. A second passed and she fired; the great beast staggered, but in a second, growling fearfully, it rose upon its hind feet and came on.

The rifle had not been lowered, and now when the bear was scarce three yards away, quick as thought Addie fired shot after shot right into its breast and throat.

The bear, glaring as fiercely as at first, seemed to rise higher yet, then gave a scream of agony and sank at her feet.

"Thank Heaven it is over!" the girl gasped, dropping the rifle, which fell outside the cabin, for she had bravely advanced to the very entrance to face and repel the savage beast.

"Yes, and pretty well over, my lost damsel!" said a sardonic voice right before her. "Thanks to you for your fire and noise, for they have been my pilots down the hill."

"It is the monster, Lasalle! A thousand times worse are you than the dead beast there!" cried Addie.

"Thanks for your opinion, my beauty. Since I hold this good rifle in my hands, I think I can bring you to better terms, or else send you where angels will wait on you."

The villain raised and cocked the deadly weapon she had dropped, and laughed in her face. He expected to see her sink trembling before his deadly aim, but never had he been more mistaken.

"Kneel!" he shouted. "Kneel both of you, and ask for your lives!"

"Kneel you, and pray to Heaven for pardon, if you can!" cried Addie; "for it is I who hold your life at my mercy. The rifle has no charge left, but here are eleven deaths in my hands, and I am calm, while you, poor coward, shake with fear. Heap up the wood, Lucille. I would not miss for want of light."

She held both her revolvers in her hands.

Lucille obeyed, and the light fell full on Lasalle's wild, hateful face.

"Kneel and pray, if you have a prayer to breathe!" said Addie, low and firm; and her fingers pressed two triggers, while two deadly barrels were levelled at his breast. "Move one inch to advance and I fire!" she added.

"Lucille! You will not let her fire!" cried the man.

"Yes. Murderer of my husband—yes!" screamed Lucille. "Spare him not. I fear him more than the wildest beast that roams the wilderness!"

"Pray!" said Addie. "She has spoken your doom. When I count three you die! One!—pray while you can! Two!—coward! you have one minute more!"

"Spare me—spare me!" gasped the wretch; and he sank upon his knees.

"The mercy you would have given me I give to you!" was her slow, firm answer. "Pray to Heaven—not me!"

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

He seemed to gather up for a spring, every muscle swelling and his eyes flashing with a mad fire, when she uttered the word: "THREE!"

At the same instant a ball sped from each pistol. One crashed through his brain, the other through his black heart. He sprang forward, his lips breathing a terrible curse; but it was too late. He fell dead at the feet of the women whom he had destined for a cruel fate.

And now, when all need for nerve was gone—when her fearful perils were over—Addie sat down weak as a child, and wept.

Lucille called her back to thought and action when she said:

"Look, brave mistress, look! Day is breaking."

"Then let us fly from here. I cannot bear to look on that dead man's form, wicked as he was. Will Heaven ever forgive me? Two men have I sent to their doom within a single day and night."

"Noble lady, grieve not. Had you not done these deeds, our lives would have been lost. You have saved honour and life. Do not be weak now. I was helpless when you needed me. My coward heart failed, but now—now cheer up, and we will hasten on, hoping for relief and safety yet."

Addie rose and faintly smiled.

"I will try to be myself again," she said. "Pick up that empty rifle, that I may once more load it. Then we will go on, feeling as if we could take care of ourselves anywhere after this night's experience."

Addie hurried to reload the weapons, and, when light was fairly seen in rosy hues rising from the east, she and Lucille took it for a course, and, wading over a stream, started upon their new day's journey.

Not until they had gone miles did they think of stopping to eat of the meat so providentially prepared by Lucille the night before. Then, when they reached a spring that trickled from a rock on a little hill, they paused to quench their thirst, refill their canteen, and strengthen themselves with a little food.

"We are doing nobly to-day, and I feel strong in heart and body once more," said Addie as she rose from a mossy seat to continue her journey. Then, glancing back, she added: "We have come at least ten miles, and it cannot be more than eight o'clock."

Lucille glanced back, and as she did so a gasping cry left her lips.

"We are followed—we are followed!" she whispered, and she pointed to a far-off ridge where the forms of men—armed men, moving swiftly on—rose in view.

"They may be friends, but I will not trust to it," said Addie. "Forward with me, Lucille! We will reach a forest

A Happy Reunion.

ahead in two or three hours at most, and if there before them we surely can elude their search."

"Heaven helping us, yes!" said Lucille; and she hurried on without another word. But every little while she looked back, and her heart sank when she saw that the men were closing fast upon them.

CHAPTER XV.

A HAPPY REUNION.

WHEN the long-wished day-dawn came Buffalo Bill, Texas Jack, and Big Elk were astir, ready to track Lasalle if he had not indeed broken his neck in ascending the hill, as they had reason to believe.

They soon found traces of his ascent, found where he had fallen a short distance, and so lacerated some portion of his body or one of his limbs as to leave traces of blood. But he had afterwards ascended by an old water-course, caused by a depression in the ridge above, which drew the falling rains to one point, and though the scouts hurried to follow up the signs they reached the top of the ridge only to be disappointed. There, for a little while, his track was lost entirely, but Big Elk, who seemed to have a hound-like scent, declared that he smelled smoke.

"From our own fire below, no doubt," exclaimed Buffalo Bill.

"No—the wind is blowing from the east," said Texas Jack, hurrying to the other, or eastern side of the cliff. "Ah! there is smoke down below here in a grove, and the trail of blood down another ravine. We have our game close at hand. Let us follow it up."

"Agreed!" cried Buffalo Bill, and he, with Big Elk, hastened to follow Texas Jack down the steep.

The latter almost flew down, jumping from rock to rock, and fast as the others followed he was in the woods and at the cabin, where Adeline and Lucille had recently been, fully a minute before they arrived.

"Now, what do you think of that?" he shouted as Buffalo Bill and Big Elk came up. "There lays Jacques Lasalle, dead, with two bullet holes through him. And there lays as big a cinnamon bear as I ever saw, shot in half a dozen vital places."

"Who could have done such a deed?" asked Buffalo Bill in wonder.

"Who?" shouted Texas Jack, his face all aglow. "Look at the tracks in the sand by the brook. They are the foot-prints of two women—women with feet so small as if they weren't made for anything but to look at. And those women, with the tools they doubtless took from Mormon Ben, have done this work."

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

The scouts and Big Elk now hurried forward, and in less than an hour caught sight of Adeline and Lucille.

"Jerusalem, how they travel!" said Texas Jack as the sweat poured from his brow. "But we gain. If they only knew who we are they'd stop."

"They'll not endure this strain of travel long. We gain faster now. See, they are stopping!" said Buffalo Bill a few minutes later.

"Yes—they halt as if alarmed by something they see in front. They are on a ridge. If there are Indians in front of them, the sooner we are up the better."

The scouts, with Big Elk, had got within a mile of the women when they saw that two more persons, one of those evidently a woman, had joined the other two.

"They must be two who have escaped from Lasalle's band," said Texas Jack. "At any rate, the women receive them as friends."

YOU MUST GET THEM!

Two New Numbers of the

BOYS' OWN LIBRARY

On Sale March 24th.

No. 9.—A FIGHTING CHANCE.
A Splendid Boxing Yarn.

No. 10.—CAPTAIN OF KINGSCROFT.
Fun and Adventure at School.

Price 3d.

ASK YOUR NEWSAGENT TO SHOW YOU
EARLIER NUMBERS

"There is something more up," said Buffalo Bill. "They have not moved on since they first stopped, and they look as if they were between two fires."

"We'll soon know," cried Jack. "Ah! do you hear that, Bill? Don't it sound good?"

It was the distant notes of a bugle, sounding a cavalry call.

"Good! Good!" exclaimed Buffalo Bill. "There's no conundrum in that. It is McPherson, all over."

The scouts and Big Elk still pressed on, and were now glad to see that Adeline recognised them. They soon reached the spot where the women had halted, while the cavalry, in three columns, was yet some way off, though advancing at a trot.

Addie, weeping with joy, threw her arms about the noble form of Texas Jack and kissed him again and again, he blushing like a schoolboy under the glorious infliction, while Buffalo Bill stood by and laughed.

A Happy Reunion.

"It serves you right, Jack," he said. "I've got a pretty cousin of my own, away off East, that I'd like to have hug me as hard."

"Here is Master Edouard, the young artist," cried Texas Jack the moment Addie "let up" on him. "And he has got a strange angel in his company."

As the scout spoke thus De Carle and his girl-saviour came forward.

"You may well call sweet Eva Stamford an angel," said the artist. "Had it not been for her, I should not now be alive. Mademoiselle Addie, she is an orphan. Her parents and brothers were slain by the Indians, and she has lived a hermit life in a cave, a day's journey from here, ever since."

"I will be a sister to her, as I have been to you, good Edouard," said Addie, extending her arms towards the lovely girl.

*You'll be Sorry if you
Miss Them!*



*They're Grand
Stories.*

"She is very sisterly, now that Texas Jack is here," said Buffalo Bill to himself. "The cousin stands a better show than the artist now."

"One question, my cousin Addie, before the troops get here. Who killed Mormon Ben and Jacques Lasalle?" asked Texas Jack.

"I did—it was dreadful, but I had to do it," said Addie.

"Had to? Why, I would have given my left arm to have done so much. You have killed two as bad men as ever lived to curse humanity—two of the worst evil-doers on the face of the earth. I glory in you. You are the Queen of the Prairie. You must tell us all about it when we have time. Ah—here is the old major, and he has got fresh men and horses from the fort—spare horses, too."

Joining the party, composed of the scouts, artist, women, and Big Elk, the cavalry officer was soon made acquainted with the material facts already in possession of the reader.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LAST OF BASIL LA MORT.

WITH the soldiers now as an escort, our friends made a start for the fort. But they had not gone many miles ere the Ute camp was sighted, where, it will be remembered, Basil La Mort had found sanctuary owing to his temporary madness.

After a short discussion the major and the scouts decided to surround and enter the camp, for the Utes were no friends of the palefaces at that time.

So it was that when La Mort looked from the opening of the Ute wigwam he was struck with terror and despair.

"The true Omohundro is on my track," he gasped. "The Indians are appalled—they could not save me if they would."

The Utes, unable to fly, for their horses were at feed some way off, had gathered round their chief, close to the lodges, ready to die fighting, for they knew the troops, well-mounted, could cut them down if they fled.

Wolf-Slayer heard the wailing cry of Basil La Mort as the latter, seeing his mortal foe coming, sank down in terror, and with a savage cry he shouted:

"Wolf-Slayer will have one scalp before he goes down!"

Springing back to his lodge, he dragged the unhappy wretch out in front of his people and sent his knife hilt-deep in his quivering breast. Then, while his yell still rang loud over the plains, and while Basil La Mort still lived, the chief tore the scalp from the villain's head.

He held up the horrible trophy, when the major, willing to capture rather than to slay, had a white flag reared in front of the column. The sign was more than the Utes had hoped for, but the moment it went up their arms went down, and they stood still, quietly waiting for the next act in the drama.

The major, with the scouts, rode boldly to the front where Wolf-Slayer stood.

"It is La Mort himself," cried Texas Jack, springing from his horse as he saw a white man on the ground. "The scoundrel has washed off his paint and died in his own colour!"

"I am not dead, but have life enough to curse you," gasped the wretch, partially rising on his hands and knees. "Jean Omohundro, you may see your estates, but Adeline is——"

"Here, monster! Here!" cried the brave girl herself. "Here alive and well, ready to guide my cousin to his own in beautiful France, while you are left for the ravens of the plains."

e Last of Basil La Mort.

Even his last agony was doubled by this discovery, and Basil La Mort shrieked out an awful anathema while he sank back dying.

Over the dead body of his scalped victim Wolf-Slayer, questioned by the major, told how he had met Basil La Mort, why he had spared him at first, and why he killed him now, believing that he and his band would have to fight their last fight.

The major was so pleased at the manner in which the last officer of the Red Brotherhood had perished that he told the Utes to go—to keep peace with white men, but to kill all who put on red paint in order to get the Indians blamed for their own misdeeds.

Wolf-Slayer was only too glad to get off so easily, and, while the troops halted to feed their horses and rest, he struck his lodges and hurried off with his band towards the

You're nearly to the end of this yarn—

So what about something else to read?

The Boys' Own Library. Price 3d.

The Diamond Library. Price 2d.

Buffalo Bill Library. Price 2d.

will supply the want.

snow-crowned mountains in the west, where the hunting-ground of his people lay.

Soon afterwards Big Elk sent up his signals for his Pawnee braves and before the sun set many of them had rejoined him.

"Whose scalp is that at your belt," asked Texas Jack, noticing, when Big Elk raised his blanket from his shoulders, that a fresh scalplock hung there.

"It was worn by the man killed by the white squaw whom the Whirling Rope loves," said the Pawnee.

"Ah! it is from the head of Lasalle. You took it while I hurried on."

"Yes. Big Elk did not want Wide Mouth to come up and get it."

"Your head is level, old boy. No one else would have thought of that."

Joined by Lucille Breton and Eva Stamford, Adeline Cherchille now turned away from the body of her last enemy,

Buffalo Bill's Comrade Scout.

and, accompanied by her cousin, went to a tent which the major had caused to be put up for the use of the women.

That night the major and his officers joined the party by invitation, listened to the story of Eva Stamford, to the history of Addie Cherchille, and learned that the popular scout known so long as Texas Jack was really the descendant of one of the noblest families in France, by title a marquis, and the inheritor of wealth which would take any man but him quickly from the hardships of the prairie and mountain. For Jack laughed when they asked him how soon he would go to France to take possession there.

"I would rather be a free American, rifle in hand, skimming over these broad plains on my own swift horse, than be a king across the great waters," was his reply. "Am I not right, sweet cousin?"

Addie looked at him with her great, bright eyes and whispered:

"If you think so, yes. Your thoughts, your hopes, your wishes are my law."

"And what says our young friend, the artist?" asked Texas Jack, turning to Edouard de Carle.

The latter sat with the hand of Eva Stamford clasped in his own. His eyes were riveted on her lovely, happy face, and there was no need for him to make reply.

Why should we linger over the tale that ends so happily, unless it be to tell you that Lucille Breton found her husband recovering from his wound when the force returned to Fort McPherson? Well, it was so, and for the present this is

THE END.

Another fine **BUFFALO BILL NOVEL** is on sale with this book. Ask for No. 72, entitled:

THE LIFE STORY OF MEXICAN JOE.

NOTE.—When buying stories of Adventure in the Far West, be sure that you get those belonging to the

ORIGINAL ALDINE SERIES.

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION RATES.—Two New Numbers of **BUFFALO BILL NOVELS** are published each month, price 4d. each. They will be sent to any address post free, as published, for **ONE YEAR** on receipt of a Postal Order for 10/-. Cash to be forwarded with order to The Publisher, The Goodship House, Crown Court, Chancery Lane, London, W.C. 2.

CHOOSE YOUR CAREER.

Yes; CHOOSE your career; MAKE your career; that is the only way to get on. It's no use folding your hands and waiting. Nothing comes in the world of work to him who waits except a tombstone. The men and boys who make their way who succeed, who win and hold good positions, are those who have a definite object, and who, whatever happens, determinedly push and fight to get there. If you are unable to enlist, what is your aim? Read this list of

POSITIONS FOR WHICH THE I.C.S. QUALIFY STUDENTS

Designer	Advertisement Writer	Mechanical Engineer
Draughtsman	Architect	Mining Engineer
Electrical Engineer	Book-keeper	Motor Engineer
Furniture Maker	Cabinet Maker	Salesman
Gas-Power Engineer	Chauffeur	Steam Engineer
Marine Engineer	Commercial Traveller	Wireless Operator

If you will write to us we will send you full particulars of the training the International Correspondence Schools will give you to qualify you for any of the above positions. Please name which position you are in or want to be in, even if it is not given above. These Schools give a thorough, practical and up-to-date training; not a mere theoretical, but a practical training by practical men for ambitious youths and men. Address:—

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS, LIMITED

75p, International Buildings, Kingsway, London, W.C.

(To avoid delay please use our full address.)

ALDINE HANDY SERIES

Price 6d. each.

GARDENING & ALLOTMENTS FOR
ALL
PLAIN COOKERY FOR ALL

FORTUNE TELLING FOR ALL
THE MODERN DREAM BOOK

OF ALL NEWSAGENTS, 6d. each. or post free, 7d., from
THE ALDINE PUBLISHING Co., LTD., Crown Court, Chancery Lane, London, W.C. 2

**64-PAGE BOOK ABOUT HERBS AND HOW TO
USE THEM, 2d. Send for one.—TRIMNELL,
The Herbalist, 144, Richmond Road, Cardiff.
Established 1879.**

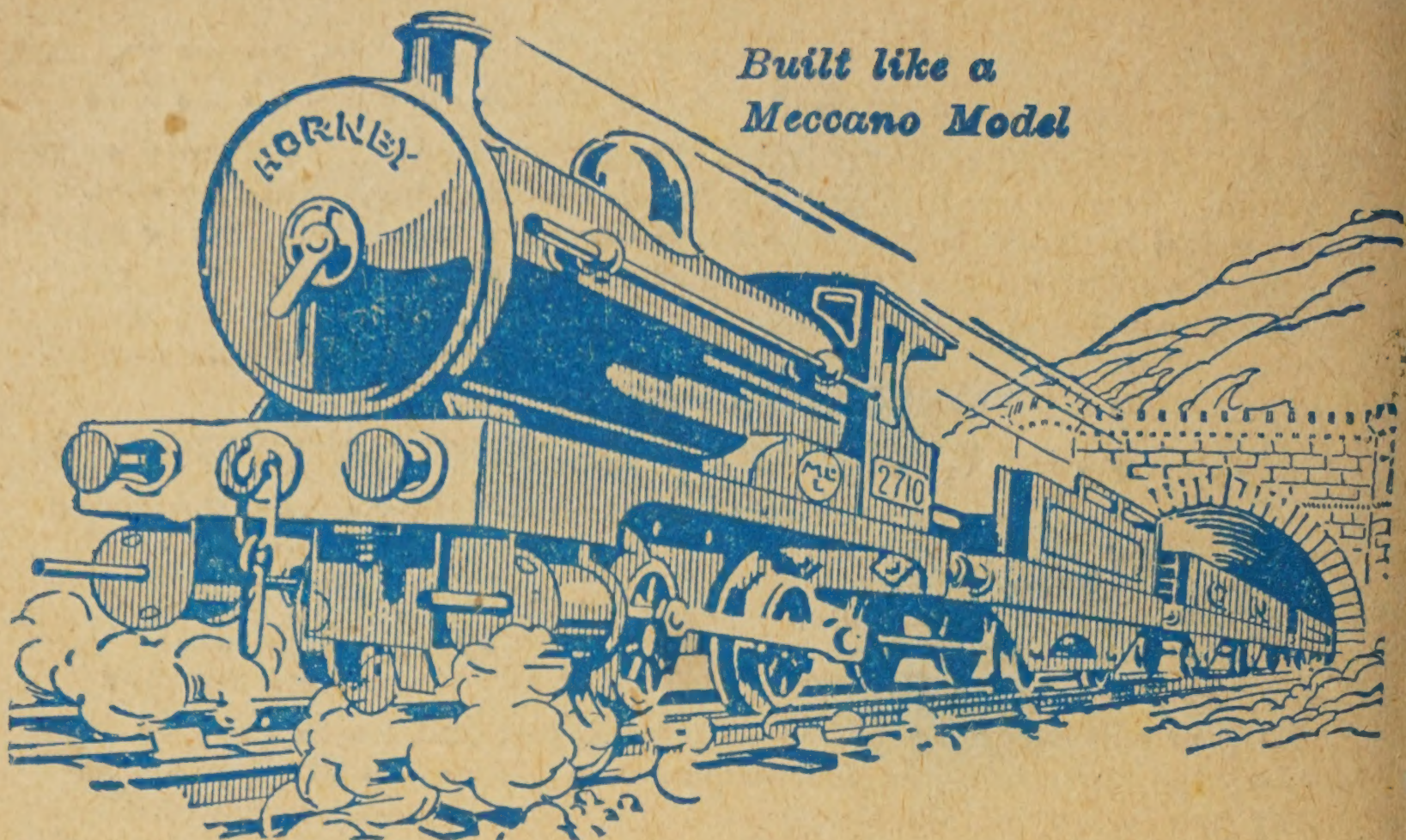
..... **CUT THIS OUT**

"Buffalo Bill N." Pen Coupon.

Value 6d.

Send this coupon with P.O. for only 5/- direct to Fleet Pen Co., 119 Fleet Street, London, E.C. 4, in return you will receive (post free) a splendid British Made 14ct. Gold Nibbed Fleet Pen, value 10/6. If you save four further coupons each will count as 6d. off the price, so you may send five coupons and only 3/-. Say whether you want a fine, medium, or broad nib. This great offer is made to introduce the famous Fleet Pen to "Buffalo Bill Novels" readers. (Foreign postage extra.) *Satisfaction Guaranteed or Cash Returned.*

Self-Filling, or Safety Models 2/- extra.



*Built like a
Meccano Model*

THE HORNBY CLOCKWORK TRAIN



FREE TO BOYS.
A SPLENDID NEW
MECCANO BOOK

This is a beautiful new book which shows boys how to enjoy every minute of their play hours. It tells you all about the Hornby Clockwork Train, and all the other Meccano products.

TO GET A FREE COPY just show this page to three chums and send us their names and addresses.

Address your letter to Dept. P

THE Hornby Train is first of all the smartest looking and the smoothest running Clockwork Train you ever saw.

But the Hornby Train has also a remarkable new feature. It can be taken entirely to pieces and rebuilt, just like a Meccano model. All the parts being standardised.

If one of the parts is damaged or lost, you can replace it with a new one, and fit it yourself.

Supplied in Gauge 0 in three different colours to represent the L. & N.W., G.N., and Midland Railway systems. Each Engine is fitted with Reversing Gear, Brakes, and Regulators.

Price, complete with Engine, Tender, Goods Wagon, and strong steel track, packed in fine box **27/6**

**Perfect Mechanism
Beautiful Finish
Standardised Parts**

Look for this mark when buying a Clockwork Train. It indicates that your Train has been manufactured by Meccano Limited, and it has our full guarantee of quality, efficiency and workmanship behind it.



Meccano Ltd : Binns Rd : Liverpool

Published by the Aldine Publishing Company, Ltd., Goodship House, Crown Court, Chancery Lane, London, W.C. 2. Printed by HAZELL, WATSON & VINEY, LTD, London and Aylesbury. Agents for the Colonies (Australia and Canada), Gordon and Gotch, London; for Canada, the Imperial News Company, Ltd., London; for South Africa William Dawson & Sons, Ltd., London, and the Central News Agency, Ltd.